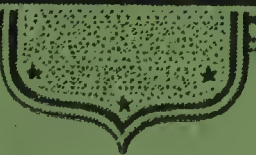


THE POCKET RIFLE





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THE SILVER MEDAL STORIES.

By J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

1. THE SILVER MEDAL.
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3. HIS OWN MASTER.
4. BOUND IN HONOR.
5. THE POCKET RIFLE.
6. THE JOLLY ROVER.

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THE
POCKET-RIFLE

BY
J. T. TROWBRIDGE

ILLUSTRATED

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THE POCKET-RIFLE.

CHAPTER I.

MASTER CRAM'S SCHOOL.

IT was noon by Master Cram's watch. The last recitation had been heard, books and slates were put away, and the dull and weary faces about the school-room brightened with the expectation of a speedy dismissal.

Master Cram turned to a visitor who had come in an hour before. "Mr. Pavode," he said, "would you like to make a few remarks?"

A smile went like a streak of sunshine around the room. Only one of the older pupils' faces remained serious. It was that of the visitor's son, Lem.

Mr. Lemuel Pavode, the father, sometimes nicknamed "Lowmy Pavode," was a new member of the school-committee. He was a shrewd and thrifty farmer, but so notoriously illiterate that the confer-

ring of such an office upon him had passed for a good joke.

Everybody knew how he came by his nickname. He had once got up to speak in town-meeting.

"'Low me, Mr. Moderator, if you'll 'low me, — I'd like to say a few words, if you'll 'low me, Mr. Moderator, — if you'll 'low me," he stammered; and with a final "'Low me," he sat down.

Some wag changed Lemuel to "Lowmy" on the spot; and he had been known as "Lowmy" Pavode ever since.

It was the knowledge of his ignorance, and of this anecdote illustrating it, which made his son Lem look anxious, and all the other big boys and girls smile, when the new committee-man was invited to address the school.

"Wal," said he, uncrossing his legs, and slowly rising from his chair, "*if you'll 'low me.*"

The school broke into a titter. Lem turned scarlet. He was an honest, sensitive boy, and it did seem as if the old man might have had mercy on him, and kept still.

But the new committee-man had brought to his office zeal if not knowledge. He had something to say, and he was bound to say it. He placed his hands on the back of the chair, and stood for a

moment wrinkling up his features in a comical grimace, and trying to remember the speech he had thought over beforehand.



"Wal," he repeated, "I don't seem to git at jest what I was goin' to start on. But I guess there's one thing the boys 'll understand."

He turned to his overcoat, which was hanging on a peg behind the door, thrust his hand into one of the deep pockets, and brought out a thing like a pis-

tol with a slender barrel of blue steel, perhaps ten inches long.

"See that, boys?" he said, with a triumphant grin, as he laid it on the master's desk.

He thrust in his hand again and produced a light frame of bright metal, shaped something like a very irregular triangle, with slightly curved sides and one open end.

"See that, boys?" he repeated, holding it up before the surprised and interested school.

"Ye may giggle at my 'temp's at a speech," he went on, his tongue becoming loosened, "and I can't blame ye. I ain't much of a speechifyer. Tell ye the reason byme-by. But ye don't giggle much now, du ye?"

The pupils were in fact too much excited by curiosity and astonishment to laugh even at old Lowmy Pavode's odd blunders.

"I can't put my words together very well, mabby, but I guess I can put this and that together, — *if you'll 'low me.*"

There was a faint revival of the tittering. But the old man took no notice of it. He adjusted the handle of the tube to the open end of the frame, fastening it with a screw.

"Now, when it's put together," he said, "I needn't

tell ye what it is, boys. Who can name the critter?"

"Pistol!" said a small boy down in front.

"Gun!" said a larger boy behind him.

"Rifle! rifle!" chorused three or four on the rear seats.

"Wal, ye come pooty nigh it, some on ye," Mr. Pavode smilingly resumed, well-pleased with the success of his object-lesson. "What do you say it is, you boys in the corner there? You look as if you knowed."

The "boys in the corner there" were Worth Lankton and Chase Atway; and two very noticeable boys they were. Worth was the dark-haired one, with the high, square forehead and firm features, quite strong and resolute for those of a boy of sixteen.

He was in the corner. The boy next him was Chase. He had blue eyes, constantly changing with flashes of expression. He was not so tall, nor so dignified, nor so old by half a year as Worth; but handsomer and wittier.

Different as they were, these boys were intimate friends. They were nearly always together, out of school and in. They helped each other in their studies; joined in the same sports, hunting, fishing, nutting, or ball-playing; and often "changed work,"

as they called it, in order to keep on the same side of the dividing-line between their fathers' farms.

Now, when the committee-man addressed his question to them, they acted characteristically. Chase, always ready to defer to his comrade, gave him a sidelong look and nod, as if to say, "Go ahead, and tell him."

Worth was quite as modest as Chase; but with his strong self-reliance it never occurred to him to yield place to anybody.

"I call it a pocket-rifle," said he; "a breech-loading, skeleton-breech pocket-rifle."

"That's about it," said Mr. Pavode, approvingly. "The 'cutest thing! Take it apart and you can carry it in your pocket, pervided your pocket is big enough. Without the britch, it shutes like a pistol. Clap on the britch and it's a rifle, and you can shute a squirrel a hundred yards off. Or you can shute a deer with it, pervided agin ye go where there's deers to shute."

Aware of interesting his audience, the man who had stammered so ludicrously in town-meeting, even Lowmy Pavode, could be eloquent.

"And now," said he, "I want ye to give another guess. What ye s'pose I'm goin' to du with it?"

This question also was directed towards the corner.

Again the younger boy deferred to Worth the honor of answering. But Worth, slow and serious, wasn't ready. Then a flash of fun lighted up Chase Atway's face, as he replied, "Teach the young idea how to shoot." This was followed by a burst of genuine laughter from the school, in which even Master Cram joined.

Worth gave Chase a lively nod of approval, and a look in which sparkled admiration for his wit, together with an expression which seemed to say, "You got ahead of me then; I wish I had said that!"

CHAPTER II.

LOWMY PAVODE'S "IDEE."

MR. PAVODE took the laugh as evidence of the popularity of his entertainment, and went on, —

"That's my idee, edzac'ly! To larn yer idees how to shute, — if you'll 'low me, Mr. Cram."

To keep down the titter which was rising again, and also, perhaps, to show his own familiarity with the quotation of which Chase had given a part, Mr. Cram gave the whole, smilingly, beating time to the rhythm with his ruler :

"'Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot!'"

Who can tell me where those lines occur?"

Once more Chase waited for Worth; and Worth, after a moment's hesitation, replied, —

"In Pope's 'Essay on Man.'"

Mr. Cram looked satisfied; but immediately appealed to the school, —

"Is he right?"

"Yes! yes!" clamored a dozen pupils; though hardly one of them knew anything about Pope.

"Right!" repeated the school-master, glad to show off his first class to the committee-man.

But he noticed a peculiar smile on Chase Atway's face; and he knew that Chase was the best-read boy in school.

"You don't think so, Chase?" he asked.

Chase smiled, shrugged, and lifted his knowing eyebrows. But he did not like to take away from his friend the honor of leading off in this little literary discussion. So he held his peace.

"You don't think it is Pope's 'Essay on Man?'"

"I don't think it is," replied Chase, with a look more positive than his words.

"Well, where do the lines occur?"

"In Thomson's 'Seasons.'"

"No, sir," said Worth, with a quick gesture of his forefinger. "I'm sure it's Pope."

"I'll show it to you in Thomson's 'Seasons' tomorrow," Chase replied, with the quiet air of one who knew.

"Thomson's 'Seasons' is in blank verse," argued Worth.

"The lines quoted are blank verse," retorted Chase.

"Then I don't know what rhyme is," said Worth, warmly.

Mr. Cram wished to stop them, but was inclined to take Worth's side of the question. Mr. Pavode stood holding the pocket-rifle, which had started the discussion, waiting for it to cease, and wondering what it was all about.

The master repeated the lines, and said to Chase, "Do you mean to say that *thought* and *shoot* don't rhyme?"

"They are not meant to rhyme, that is what I say. '*Thought, — shoot!*'" He pronounced the first word very broad, and the second very short. "They don't rhyme at all, or very poorly."

"There are worse rhymes in the '*Essay on Man*,'" said Worth. "Besides, the couplet sounds like Pope."

"It isn't a couplet," said Chase.

"Not a couplet?" cried Worth, kindling more and more. "Any two lines of verse are a couplet, if they belong together."

"If they rhyme; not otherwise," said Chase, with a light laugh.

"That will do, boys!" said the master, tapping with his ruler on the desk. "Mr. Pavode is waiting to go on. We'll finish this discussion some other time."

"I'd like to have one thing decided now," Worth insisted. "He says a couplet must have its two lines rhyme. Is that so?"

"Really—I—I am not certain of that. And if Mr. Pavode will kindly excuse me,"——

Mr. Cram turned to a dictionary lying on his desk.

"Sartin, sartin!" said the committee-man, good-naturedly. "Settle your p'int's of larnin.' What I've got to say 'll keep."

Mr. Cram read aloud from the book of definitions.

"'COUPLET. Two taken together; a pair, or couple; especially two lines of verse that rhyme with each other.'"

Chase laughed again; but Worth looked stern.

"I think we shall have to decide that, strictly speaking, a couplet must be rhymed, as Chase says," remarked the master.

"I don't admit it," Worth declared, "any more than I admit"——

But the master rapped sharply with his ruler, cutting off further discussion.

The two friends often had animated disputes of this sort; for Chase, much as he was inclined to defer to Worth, had opinions of his own, and was not backward in expressing them. But they never really quarrelled; and when the heat of argument was over, they were as good friends as ever.

Mr. Pavode was now invited to proceed.

"Wal, as I was a-sayin'," he resumed. "But, fust

place, I may as well tell ye how I come by this 'ere trinket. It's nothin' I ever thought of investin' my money in, you better b'lieve.

"I had a boarder last summer, and he went off without settlin.' But he left a few' things, and this among 'em; and wrote me arterwards 't if I'd take 'em towards payin' for his board, 'twas 'bout the best thing he could du.

"So I took 'em, 'cause I had tu. And when they done me the honor to put me on to the school-committee, I says to myself, 'This pocket-rifle 'll make things lively if I offer it to the boys as a prize!'"

Mr. Pavode paused with the broadest kind of a smile on his face, to enjoy the sensation which this announcement made in the school.

Nobody thought of laughing at him now. Every one, especially every boy, was eager to know on what conditions that extraordinary prize was to be won.

"My boy, there," Mr. Pavode went on, glancing at Lem, who had by this time ceased to blush for his father, "he wanted me to give it to him. 'I won't give it to you, nor nobody,' says I; 'but I'll give ye a chance to win it.' And now he can go in with the rest on ye, and take the prize if he can. I hope he will," the father added, with a broad grin at the son.

"And what's the prize to be for?" he went on. "I'll tell ye what it's to be for. For spellin.' FOR SPELLIN'!" he repeated, emphatically. "Spellin' is the bottom of all book-knowledge, and I'm glad to hear this school has got up a fresh interest in't.

"I never was much of a speller myself, and that's the reason I never could make a speech. To know how to put words together proper, a man must know how to put the letters together that makes the words.

"If I'd had that much larnin' licked into me when I was a boy, I might be a speechifyin' man; I might be a member of Congress, jes' 's like's not. Jes' 's easy for me to've been a member o' Congress as a member of the school-committee, if I'd only knowed how to spell. Am I right, Mr. Cram?"

"Spelling is certainly a very essential part of our education," the master observed.

"So I says to myself, 'I'll offer this 'ere prize to be computed for by the best spellers.' And now I put it into Mr. Cram's hands to be kep', and finally gi'n to the best speller, whuther it's my boy or another boy, 'cordin' to *his* best judgment."

So saying, the committee-man formally presented the pocket-rifle to the teacher, who was a little embarrassed at receiving it. He had never handled

a firearm in his life, and did not see clearly the wisdom of offering such a prize.

"The girls! nothing for the girls!" said a half-audible voice on the girls' side of the room.

"Girls can compute jest the same as the boys," replied the committee-man.

It was the second time he had used *compute* for *compete*, but his blunders no longer excited a smile.

"Girls can win the prize, and then swap it for suthin' more to their taste, or give it away, jes' 's they like," he explained.

Then Master Cram felt called upon to make a little speech.

"Since Mr. Pavode has taken the responsibility of offering this truly elegant and valuable, though some might say, dangerous, prize," he said, "I engage to do all in my power to execute the important trust with impartiality. Perhaps we can also arrange to offer a second prize to be competed for by the girls. It being Saturday, there will be no school this afternoon; and we will now postpone the subject until next week."

"If you'll 'low me," Mr. Pavode interposed. "I was goin' for to say that any of the boys can have a chance to look at the prize arter school if they're so disposed."

"Certainly," said Mr. Cram.

Accordingly, after the dismissal, the boys flocked around the teacher's desk, handling, or watching others handle, the wonderful toy, with the liveliest curiosity.

"Here's the way ye slip the ca'tridges in," said Mr. Pavode, showing with an empty shell how the barrel was loaded. "It goes back with a snap, this way; and ye're ready for yer game. For the best speller, remember!"

And he walked off, highly satisfied with the interest he had excited.

"There'll be spellin' in the school this winter, if never before, you bet!" were his parting words to Master Cram.

CHAPTER III.

NEIGHBORING FARMS.

"WHAT are you going to do this afternoon?" Worth said to Chase, as they walked home from school together.

"I suppose I shall have to husk corn," Chase replied. "What are you going to do?"

"I've got those russet apples to pick."

"How long will it take you?"

"Oh, a couple of hours, if Tim helps," said Worth. "Then I mean to go a-hunting. There are lots of squirrels and partridges in the woods this fall."

"I think pa'll let me go a-hunting, if you do," said Chase. "Stop at our house, and we'll ask him. And I'll tell you what! Come and work for me an hour, husking corn, then I'll help you pick the apples. Pa'll agree to that, I know."

Worth readily consented to this plan. The two friends had never been on better terms. Their little dispute in school seemed to have been forgotten by both, until Chase, as they entered Mr. Atway's door-yard, said, carelessly,—

“By the way! come into the house, Worth, and we’ll look up that quotation.”

“What quotation?”

“Why, the one we were talking about:

‘To teach the young idea how to shoot.’

I’ve got a copy of Thomson’s ‘Seasons,’ and I think I can turn right to it.”

“I don’t doubt it,” replied Worth frankly. “When you speak so positively about anything in a book, you are sure to be right. You are the reader! I don’t know what made me say that line was Pope’s.”

“It was very natural,” Chase answered. “It sounds more like Pope than it does like Thomson. And you had Master Cram on your side.”

“But it was foolish in me to stick to it as I did,” said Worth. “I never like to be put down, you know. Though I ought to be willing to be put down by you, especially when you’re in the right.”

“Pshaw!” Chase replied, with a modest laugh and blush. “I had no idea of putting you down. I wouldn’t do such a thing for the world; and you know it, Worth.”

“Of course I do,” cried Worth warmly. “You are a most generous fellow! But it was your duty to set me right, when you knew I was wrong.”

"And when the whole school was wrong with you," said Chase, in a glow of friendly feeling. "There's pa in the shed. We'll see what he says."

He proposed their plans for the afternoon. Mr. Atway — a plain farmer, in a blue frock, and an old straw hat — looked up at the two boys from a piece of harness he was mending. Instead of answering directly, he said, —

"What makes you so late home from school?"

"Just as we were to be dismissed," replied Chase, "our new school-committee-man got up and made a speech."

"Not Pavode?" Mr. Atway exclaimed.

"Lowmy Pavode!" laughed Chase.

"It must have been a very short speech, if it was anything like the one he made in town-meeting," said his father.

"On the contrary, it was a long speech, and a very interesting speech; wasn't it, Worth?"

And Chase went on to give a lively account of the whole affair.

"A curious sort of a prize, I should say," was the farmer's amused comment. "A pocket-rifle! I suppose you two boys will compete for it?"

"I don't know; I suppose so. I haven't thought as far as that," said Chase, turning to his friend.

"I shall," Worth avowed, promptly. "And of course you will, if I do."

"I wouldn't, if I was sure of your taking it," said Chase. "But if *you* should miss it, *I* should like to get it, of course."

"I shall get it if I can," Worth replied, quietly.

"How about this afternoon?" Chase pressed his father for an answer.

"Well, well, do as you please," replied Mr. Atway, good-naturedly.

"I knew he would say that," Chase observed, as he walked away with Worth. "He always does."

But Worth was not so sure of what his father would say.

Mr. Lankton was a moody sort of man; though sometimes very indulgent, he was often morose and severe. So it was agreed that Chase should go over, as soon as he got his dinner, and first help Worth pick the apples, after which there wasn't much doubt but that Worth would be let off.

The two farms adjoined, as I have said. But Mr. Lankton's was what is called a "back-farm." It lay well down on the *intervale* — as the land bordering on the river was called — and was approached by a private road, or lane, half a mile beyond Mr. Atway's house.

Around by this road, Worth would have had a good mile and a half to walk home. But a well-trodden path across the two farms shortened the distance to less than half a mile. This was the way frequented by the boys. Behind Mr. Atway's barn was a short lane ; a few rods beyond this was the river, crossed by a rude bridge. Worth passed this, and then followed the stream down the further bank until he came to the dividing-fence between the two farms.

It was beautiful, level meadow all the way, still green with short grass, though it was now October. Hilly pastures rose beyond, and these in turn were lost on a wooded mountain-side.

All up and down the western margin of the valley ran the range of mighty hills, with bare blue peaks in the distance, and on the slopes great forests that flamed and glowed with all the gorgeous hues of an American autumn, under the midday sun.

On the eastern side of the valley was a similar, but more broken and more distant range, its vast sunny uplands checkered with farms and spotted with the shadows of moving clouds.

In the midst of the intervale flowed the slow, winding river, edged with alders and willows, and here and there a thicket festooned with wild grapes. The

water was crystal clear, and many a pool showed in its cool depths large suckers, pickerel and trout, still as their shadows on the river-bottom under them.

Beyond the meadow was an orchard near the river-bank; and beyond the orchard was the old, brown, lonely farm-house, which Worth called home. It stood on a slight elevation of ground, almost within a stone's throw of the stream. Still beyond it was the private road by which it was approached; crossing a bridge, turning off to the main road, between broken stone-walls and rows of meadow elms.

Mr. Lankton was not so neat a farmer as his neighbor Atway. His fences were not so well kept up, and his weather-beaten house stood sadly in need of a fresh coat of paint. You could hardly have told what color the last coat had been, it was so worn, and the clapboards were so furred by long exposure to the storms that swept the valley.

The warped and blackened shingles on the patched roof, the still more dilapidated barn and stable, and the sagging, half-shut gates added to the desolate loneliness of the picture. The house was not very neat within, either. The rooms were rather bare and comfortless. How different from Chase Atway's well-kept, pleasant home!

To the proud and ambitious Worth this state of things was galling enough. But he was used to it, and made the best of it, as a general thing; though this was perhaps partly the cause that he, like his father, was sometimes subject to fits of gloom.

One of these fits came over him, when, from the scene of wonderful outdoor beauty through which he had just passed, he entered the house, and sat down with his brother and sister, who had got home from school before him, at a table from which the other members of the family had already risen.

Worth looked sullenly up and down the univiting board, from under his frowning brows, and then ate his dinner in silence. Tim and Lucy laughed and prattled, but the older brother never uttered a word. Mrs. Lankton, accustomed to these moods in her husband and son, waited upon him with her usual patience. She was a feeble, overworked farmer's-wife; and it was not perhaps her fault that she made so unattractive a home.

Once more in the open air after dinner, with a pleasant task before him, in the fine October weather, Worth felt better.

His father met him and asked, "What are you going to do now?"

"I am going to pick those russets; Chase is coming over to help me," Worth replied.

"Can't you do a little stroke of work like that, without Chase?" Mr. Lankton asked.

But he was in rather an amiable mood; so Worth ventured to rejoin, —

"We can work a great deal faster together. I suppose, after the apples are picked, I can go over and help him, and have the rest of the afternoon to myself?"

"Yes, I suppose so," was the rather glum reply.

And Worth, calling Tim to his assistance, went to the shed for baskets.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

THE russet-tree was on the edge of the orchard, near the river. They were carrying ladders to it when Chase arrived.

"It's all right ; I've spoken to him," said Worth. And the boys gleefully began their stint.

It was a golden day. It was happiness merely to be in the orchard on such an afternoon. The ladders were set up against the tree, and the boys chatted and laughed as they picked.

The boughs rustled, the apples dropped into the baskets, and the baskets, when filled, were let down by reins taken from the harness, to Tim, below, who emptied them into a growing, glowing heap on the ground. Close by flowed the river, with flashing ripples and pleasant murmurs.

"Some kinds of farm-work are nice enough," said Chase from his ladder.

"Yes ; if there was nothing worse than picking russets on a day like this," Worth replied. "But I am not going to stay on a farm always, — not on *this* farm !"

"I hate to hear you say that," Chase replied.

"Why, do *you* like a farm so well?" cried Worth.

Now Chase knew that his own home-life was far pleasanter than Worth's. And it was no doubt for this reason that he liked the farm better.

But he was careful not to hurt his friend even by a hint of the truth. So he said, "I wasn't thinking of that. If you leave the farm, we shan't probably be together as we are now."

"I don't suppose we can always be together, any way," Worth replied. "We shall have to make up our minds to that, some time."

"I can't bear to think of it!" Chase exclaimed. "If you go away, I shall go too!"

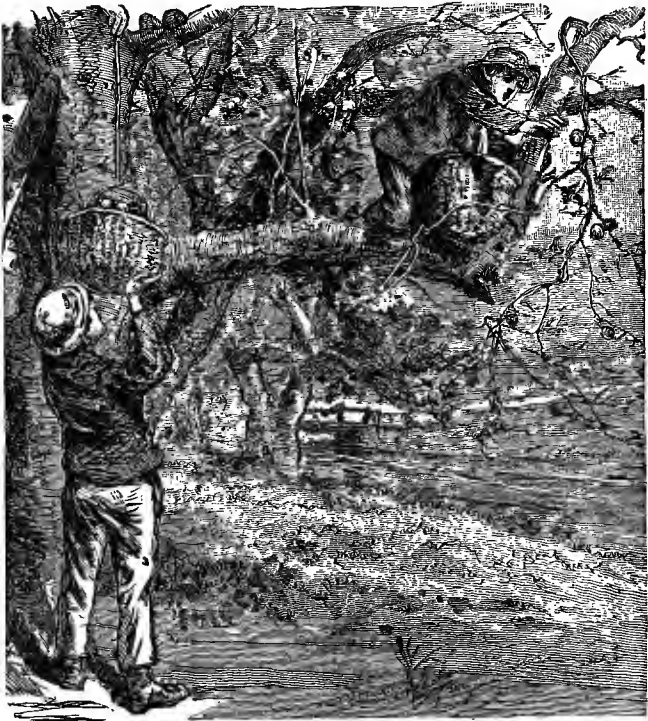
"Hallo, up there!" cried Tim from below. "You are dropping the apples!"

Chase's eyes had, in fact, suddenly grown dim, and the touch of his hand uncertain. He was so bound up in his friend that the mere thought of their separation affected him.

Was the love he received as strong as the love he gave? He never stopped to ask. It was enough for him to be with Worth, and to lavish his friendship upon him, without thinking of any return.

After all the apples had been picked which could be reached from the ladders, they had to climb about

on the limbs into the very tops of the trees, to get the scattering ones that remained. It was a longer job than they had anticipated.



“Now, if we husk corn for an hour,” said Chase, “we shan’t have any time for hunting.”

“And I owe you nearly two hours’ work,” replied

Worth. "But your father is in no hurry about the corn?"

"No; it's in the barn, waiting; a little in the way, that's all."

"We can husk that, evenings. I'll come over and help you next week."

"That 'll be fun!" cried Chase, "if pa will only agree to it. I'll hurry home and ask him, and get my gun, while you are clearing up here."

Mr. Atway agreed to it, as the boys knew very well he would. Worth watched between the orchard and the river until he saw Chase coming down the valley with something that looked like a gun, then got his own, and met him in the meadow. Then happy enough they were, as they started for the uplands and the wooded mountain-sides.

"I wish I had that pocket-rifle in place of this old shot-gun! Couldn't I pick off the squirrels from the tall trees?" said Chase.

"Maybe you will have it some day," Worth replied. "I hope so."

He was in his most genial mood. He was never so enthusiastic or impulsive as Chase in expressing his friendship; but he had a deep, full, hearty way of speaking.

"You need it more than I do," Chase said, his

own "old shot-gun" being, after all, much newer and better than Worth's; "and I hope *you* will get it."

"I think you are the best speller; I think you are the best speller in school," said Worth.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Chase, with a light laugh. "Any way, you can beat me if you try. You can beat me at anything you really put your mind to."

"I wish I could!" Worth exclaimed. "But I have to study hard for some things that come natural to you. How absurd to offer the prize for spelling! If it had been algebra, now!"

"Yes, you can beat me, you can beat the crowd in algebra," said Chase.

"Hallo!" suddenly spoke up Worth. "There are your horses on our side of the fence."

"It isn't the first time, confound 'em!" said Chase. "We try to keep 'em in our pasture, but they will get over."

"I don't care," said Worth; "but father gets a little provoked sometimes. He says he should think your father might keep his creatures at home."

Chase was slightly nettled. "I think your father is a little unreasonable," he replied.

"How so?" demanded Worth.

"Well, it isn't a very pleasant subject," said Chase; "but my father says that if *your* father would keep up his fences, there would be no trouble about the horses."



Worth retorted promptly. "My father says that old Whiteface of yours will throw down and get over any sort of a fence."

"He doesn't throw down and get over ours," said Chase. "Look here! there's the fence between our pasture and our meadow; green grass on one side, and plaguy dry, poor grass on the other. But he never gets over *that* fence."

"It's staked and ridered," said Worth.

"Just as every decent fence ought to be," returned Chase.

"You can stake and rider *your* fences; we can take care of our own," Worth answered coldly.

"Now see here, Worth, I haven't meant to say anything to hurt you. It's a matter you and I can't help; it's all right between *us*."

"Of course it is," said Worth. "I don't care if your horses *are* in our meadow. Leave 'em there."

"But I care, and I shan't leave 'em there!" Chase declared. "You see how it is. They never get over our part of the boundary fence. If your part was only half as good, there never would be any trouble, as pa says."

"I've had to stand between my father and yours in the matter of those jumping horses more than once," replied Worth.

"I'm much obliged to you for it. And I've stopped my father from sending a pretty sharp mes-

sage to yours about the fences," Chase felt compelled to answer.

"Don't do it again; let the sharp messages come," said Worth, haughtily. "We can hold our own, I guess."

"The best way to hold your own is to" — Chase began hotly, but checked himself.

"To what? Out with it!" said Worth.

"I was going to say, to take care of your fences. But this begins to look too much like a quarrel, and there's no need of it."

"No need of it at all," said Worth, but in the same cold and haughty tone.

"I couldn't quarrel with you; it would break my heart!" said Chase. "But you think I said more than I ought to about your fences. You say they are good enough."

Worth made no answer, but his eye was suffused, and his lip quivered.

"Now let me ask you one question. I know you will answer it truthfully, for you are truth itself. Your horses are not quite so enterprising as ours, I confess. But do *they* never get over your fences?"

"Yes, lots of times!" exclaimed Worth, in a sort of suppressed fury. "Our fences *are* mean and

poverty-stricken, and that's a fact! So is about everything on our place, and I am sick of it!"

"O Worth! I am sorry I have made you feel so!" Chase exclaimed.

"'Tisn't your fault," said Worth. "The fault's in the state of things. I try to have things different; but it's no use. I sometimes think I'd like to sweep fences, old barns, old gates, everything, into the creek, and then go in myself!"

"Don't feel like that, such a day as this!" Chase implored. "Just as we are starting off to have a good time!"

Worth made no reply. He helped Chase get the horses back, and put up the tumbled rails after them. Then, as they took up their guns and started again for the woods, he suddenly broke forth, —

"No, Chase, you and I can't quarrel. But I couldn't so easily forgive anybody else."

"Forgive? For what?" said Chase, wonderingly.

"For beating me twice to-day."

"Beating you! In what?"

"First before the whole school; and just now in the dispute about the fences. You were right, and I was wrong, but you know how I hate to be beaten!"

Chase did not like to hear his friend talk in that

way. It showed a feeling in him which made them both uncomfortable, and might prove dangerous.

“But I can get along with it; I won’t mind!” he said to himself, little dreaming what events were soon to happen, or under what strange and terrible circumstances they were destined to meet before long in that valley, even in the very apple-tree where they had that afternoon been so happy.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE MOUNTAIN CREST.

ON a bare crest of the mountain was poised an immense boulder; and on the sunny side of that elephantine rock — for the October air was cold up there — lay stretched a man that afternoon.

He was a slim, slouching, lazy-looking fellow, but with a certain look of shrewdness and alertness in his narrow gray eyes. He seemed to be watching something below.

A marvellous landscape was spread out before him; the entire valley extending for many miles up and down, and bounded by the farm-checked uplands and cloud-spotted slopes of the opposite range of hills.

Through the midst of the valley wound the river like a silver snake. Where it could not be seen, its way was still marked by the bushes that fringed its banks.

The fences, the roads, the slow-moving wagons, the farm-houses, even the villages far away, were all in miniature, viewed from that distance and that

height. It seemed to be a region in which only fairies lived and drove their fairy teams.

But the man was not watching far-off objects. What attracted his attention was near by.

The great rock lay so close to the edge of the crest, or rather shelf, of the mountain, — for the real crest was a long way farther back, — that, seen from below, it seemed to hang upon its very verge.

Within twenty feet of it was a cliff, to which the ground sloped rapidly. The face of the cliff was overgrown with thickets, which extended down the mountain-side until they became merged in the great forests below.

“There it is!” he said, with a twitch of one side of his face, and a blink of the eye, as the report of a gun sounded from the woods. “And there’s another!”

The second report made him wink again, and rise up on his elbow.

“It’s all for a squirrel or two,” he muttered. “Nobody would ever think of coming up so fur into the woods if ’twan’t for the squirrels. There ’tis agin! Wonder what Sal thinks of that!”

He got up farther still, and sat leaning against the rock, with the sunshine on his back, and his shadow, with that of the boulder, projected far over the thickets upon the forest-tops beyond.

He seemed to be tracing the course of the hunters — for there were evidently two of them — by the sound of their guns.

“Bang agin!” he said, after waiting a few minutes longer. “That’s better. If they’ll only keep in that direction! But I guess Sal’s been shakin’ in her shoes.”

He was startled by a sudden rustling in the thickets under the crest. The sounds approached, — twigs crackling and boughs shaking, — while he looked eagerly to see who was climbing the cliff.

Presently the head of a woman came out of the thickets, and appeared over the edge of the crag, a few rods off. The head wore a sort of loose hood; and an untidy, tattered gown quickly followed, as the woman crept on all-fours up the short slope from the edge of the cliff.

The man gave a whistle. She stopped, rose upon her feet, and seeing him seated by the rock, hurried towards him.

“You heard ’em?” she said, with a frightened face.

“Yes, I heard ’em,” he replied. “What of it?”

“I thought they was comin’ right there!” she exclaimed.

“What would they be comin’ there for?” said the man. “No danger. Hear that!”

There was another gun-shot. But it was in a direction that caused him no alarm.

"You jest clear out and go home!" he said. "I'll stay here a spell, and see if anything happens."

After the woman had gone, he heard no more reports. Farther and farther the mountain shadows crept over the wooded slopes. He stretched himself out once more beside the rock and waited.

All at once he heard voices. Two boys, with guns and game-bags, were coming along the verge of the crest, on the other side of the great rock.

It was Chase Atway and Worth Lankton, who had come up through the woods, and climbed to that height by an easier ascent than the thicket-covered cliff.

"Let's sit down here by the big rock," said Chase, "and see what we've got."

"Get on the sheltered side," said Worth. "The wind blows up here — Hallo!"

He had suddenly stumbled over a sleeping man.

At least, the man seemed to be asleep. But at the boy's "Hallo," he rose languidly to a sitting posture, winked his left eye hard, with a twitch of all that side of his face, and gave the new-comers a nod of recognition.

CHAPTER VI.

JIM LATHBROOK.

"JIM Lathbrook!" said Chase, reaching Worth's side. "How are ye, Jim?"

"Perty comf'table, I guess," the man replied, good-naturedly. "How's Damon and Pythias?"



"That's what you always call us," said Chase.

"That's what everybody calls you," replied the man.

"I don't believe you can tell why."



“Presently the head of a woman came out of the thicket, and appeared over the edge of the crag, a few rods off.” Page 44.

"Why? because you are always together; that is why."

"Yes," said Chase; "but why Damon and Pythias?"

"You've ruther got me there," Lathbrook admitted, with a smile rendered vivacious by another jerk and twitch of the cheek. "But I 'xpect Damon and Pythias must 'a' been chums, — a couple o' coves that was always together, like you be."

"I'll tell you who they were," Chase replied.

He leaned his gun against the rock, and sat down beside his game-bag. Worth remained standing, and listening. Then Chase, in a few words, related the beautiful and touching story of that ancient friendship which has made the names of Damon and Pythias immortal.

Worth looked down with a pleased and tender smile, at his comrade's enthusiasm; while Lathbrook's face twitched.

"It's a perty story," the latter said, "but it's all bosh."

"What! You don't believe in such friendship?" cried Chase.

"Not much," said Lathbrook. "Friends is all very well as long as things go smooth. But they will eat each other, when there's nothing else to eat."

"You're a moral monster, Jim Lathbrook!" Chase declared.

"Nobody ever called me anything *moral* before!" And Jim's features laughed and twitched. "I'm much obleeged to ye! But it's jest as I tell ye. Friends pull together jest as long as it's for their interest to, then they break. You'll find it so. I shouldn't be the least mite surprised to see you two fellers dead-set agin each other, let somethin' happen that makes your interests conflict, I tell ye!" And the narrow gray eyes sparkled.

"You simply show what sort of a man *you* are, when you say that," Chase replied. "What are you doing this fall?"

"I'm kinder lookin' around for a job, jest now," replied Lathbrook, dryly, with a wink and a twitch.

"You're always looking for a job, but I can't remember when you've ever found one," said Chase.

"Wal! I manage to live; and I don't kill myself with work, nuther," drawled the man. "I don't see no use in that. Guess I must be movin' towards home." And he got upon his feet.

"Where is your home?" Worth inquired.

"Jest over the mountain, here," said Lathbrook, walking lazily away.

"How *does* he manage to live, do you suppose?" queried Chase, looking after him.

"His wife goes out washing," said Worth.

"Not much, I fancy. My mother had her once; and she declared she never would have her in the house again. How a man who looks for a job from the sheltered side of a rock on the top of a mountain, and whose wife does, maybe, one day's work a month—how he can keep the pot boiling," said Chase, "is a mystery!"

"This is a good place to be looking for a job, after all!" said Worth, seating himself. "What a magnificent view! The farms down there are lovely—only get far enough away from them."

"There are our horses on your side of the fence again!" exclaimed Chase. "I'll see that old White-face has a hamper on, next time he's turned into the pasture."

The boys now overhauled their game-bags, and recounted their adventures in the woods. They had partridges and squirrels, and also a few quarts of nuts.

"There was one superb gray squirrel that I might have got just as well as not, if I'd only had that pocket-rifle," said Chase. "He was in the very top of one of the tallest trees, where my shot wouldn't reach him."

"Mr. Pavode's boarder used to pick off squirrels

with it, at long distances," said Worth. "You've beat me again!" he added, seeing that Chase had one partridge and two squirrels more than he had.

"There's no beat about it," replied Chase. "I was lucky, that's all. And we're going to divide equally, as we always do, you know."

"No, we're not!" cried Worth. "Any way, not now; we may shoot something more as we go down through the woods."

"What a curious rock this is," said Chase, as they were getting ready to start. "Did you ever notice it?"

"Yes, many times! How strange that such a big rock should be dropped right here on the top of a mountain!"

"And see how it is poised! I believe it wouldn't take much to give it a tip and tumble it off down the mountain-side!"

"What a crashing it would make!" said Worth.

He looked down into the thickets, then walked about the stone.

"With a good, long, stiff lever," said Chase, "you and I could start it. If I had a hatchet to cut a pole!"

"Or if we had a rail handy!" said Worth. "I should like to see it go."

"Wouldn't it be fun?" exclaimed Chase, growing excited, and looking around for a fence.

There was none in sight; and after talking over the matter a little while, Worth suggested, —

"Let's leave it till some other time, when we'll bring some fellows with us, and have great sport."

"I'm sure we can do it!" said Chase, consenting. "We'll launch it like a young planet. What a furrow it will plough, though, down into the woods! It will take the biggest trees, and a good many of them, to stop it."

"There's Lathbrook, now," said Worth. "He is watching us; he has been watching us all the time."

CHAPTER VII.

THROUGH THE SCHOOL-HOUSE WINDOW.

THE boys saw but one squirrel, on their way down through the woods. It bounded across the new-fallen, rustling leaves, — with which the forest floor was gayly paved, giving the effect of sunshine after the sun had disappeared behind the mountain,— and sprang to the stem of a sturdy maple.

Chase, who was a little ahead, and might have had a good shot, fell back, to give his friend a chance. "It's the same fellow I saw; isn't he a big one! Now is your time!" he said.

Worth drew up just as the squirrel ran around the trunk. Both boys hurried forward. "You'll see him in a second; wait there!" said Chase, and sprang to the farther side of the maple.

The squirrel was near the great branching limbs, when, seeing Chase, he curved his course swiftly to the opposite side. That gave Worth a chance.

He fired, but missed his aim. As the smoke of his gun cleared away, he saw the squirrel darting up one of the great limbs.

Then a second loud report rang through the woods, and the squirrel came heavily to the ground. It was Chase who had fired at the last moment, and brought down the game.

"How could you miss him? You had such a splendid shot!" he exclaimed, holding up the squirrel by the gray bushy tail, in the golden twilight of the woods.

"Don't twit me of it," Worth replied, gloomily. "You have all the luck. I can't shoot at all."

He was moody all the way home; and at parting refused to take any of the game which Chase had shot.

"Very well!" said Chase, losing patience a little; "you can take it or leave it. We always have divided, and I am going to divide now."

As he threw down a squirrel and a partridge by the fence, declaring that he would not carry them home, Worth finally consented to put them in his bag. Then to change the subject, and cheer his friend's spirits, Chase said, —

"Let's go over to the school-house, after supper, and get our spellers. We can climb in through that corner window, you know. Say! will you?"

"I should feel mean doing such a thing as that," replied Worth.

"I don't see anything mean about it. I noticed several of the boys carried their spellers home. I should have done the same, if you had; and I'm sorry we didn't."

"I'm not; and I wouldn't climb into the school-house window, to win even a finer prize than your pocket-rifle!"

Worth spoke so haughtily and so decidedly that Chase simply answered, "I would; I'm not so proud as all that!" and with a careless laugh started for home.

On coming out from the woods, the boys had seen the sunshine still flooding a part of the valley and all the opposite range of slopes and peaks; and now Chase was himself in the soft golden light as he followed the river-bank, crossed the bridge, and went up through the lane and yard to his father's house.

"'Twas a good idea of his, to get our spellers," said Worth, as he sat on the fence watching him. "Why didn't I agree to it? I am always saying or doing something I'm sure to be sorry for!"

The more he thought of his speller, the more he wished he had it; and after he had eaten his supper and milked the cows, he thought he would go over and give Chase another chance to propose getting into the school-house.

But he was in one of his perverse moods. He was ashamed to let Chase know that he had changed his mind after expressing himself with so much emphasis and scorn. So he wandered across the fields towards the road without stopping at Mr. Atway's house at all.

Meanwhile, Chase had fully made up his mind to get his speller, — without Worth, since Worth would not go with him.

It was in the deepening twilight of the October evening that he went alone to the school-house, climbed in at a rear-window, crossed the silent, dusky room, found his speller among the other books in his desk, and buttoned it under his coat.

Then, before climbing out again, he looked from the side windows to see if anybody was coming along the road.

Somebody was coming, — a tallish figure of a boy, with a peculiar droop in the shoulders, and an unmistakable pitch of the hat-brim.

“It's Worth!” said Chase, astonished. “That's the way he always wears his hat when he's in one of his dull moods.”

He wanted to fling up the window and call to his friend. But he reflected, —

“It will hurt his feelings if he knows I've come

for my speller without him. Wonder where he is going!"

A little way off Worth paused, and looked up and down; then made a quick and furtive side-start towards the school-house.



"He mustn't see that window open!" Chase thought, and hastened to close the sash.

A glance showed him that Worth, on coming around to the rear of the school-house, had paused again.

"It can't be possible he's coming for his speller,

after refusing with such a lordly air to come with me!" Chase thought, and dropped behind one of the benches to wait.



Suddenly a face appeared at the window.

It was Worth's. He did not discover Chase peeping from his gloomy hiding-place within; nor did he think how plainly he could himself be seen, perched there behind the panes against the evening sky.

Then he carefully raised the sash and crept in ; while Chase crouched like a culprit, holding his breath, and trembling from head to foot.

It was not fear that made Chase Atway tremble, in his hiding-place behind the school-house benches ; though he was indeed extremely anxious not to be discovered by his friend in that position. A far deeper feeling agitated him, an overwhelming sense of injury and wrong.

He was sorry that he had hidden there, and he wanted to rise up and show himself. But if he should, then Worth would know that his treachery was exposed. And he might think Chase as great a traitor as himself. Could the two ever be friends again after that?

Chase had always felt that he could forgive anything sooner than lose his friend. But Worth, he knew, was different. He dreaded the effect on *him* of an encounter, under such circumstances, there in the dusky school-room.

Worth went to the corner where their seats were, and fumbled some time among the books. Chase could see only his head and shoulders above the desks ; he did not venture to rise in order to observe more.

Presently Worth went back to the open window, and Chase could see him again against the evening sky. A moment only. Worth slipped out silently, closed the sash carefully, and dropped to the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORTH'S DECEPTION.

CHASE breathed again, and slowly got up, like a ghost of himself, from behind the benches.

"This is terrible!" he said in a whisper that the hollow school-room echoed.

He glided to a window, and saw Worth hurrying back the way he had come, keeping close in the shadow of the roadside fence.

"He would not come with *me*, when I proposed it, because it would be so mean. But having, as he thinks, prevented me from coming, now he comes without me and carries off his book like a thief. Oh, the idea of his thinking to get the start of me in that way!"

Such to Chase, in the anguish of his heart, appeared to be the natural interpretation of his friend's motives.

But maybe he did Worth injustice.

"After all, he may not have come for his speller!"

Chase caught eagerly at that straw of hope, and hastened to his friend's desk.

"If I find his, I will leave mine; I will never

take advantage of him in any way!" he vowed to himself, as his hand groped among the books.

The faint hope that had risen died, and left his heart sick. All the rest of Worth's books were there, but the speller was gone. Chase returned to the window, and leaned tremblingly upon it; he gazed out at the darkening sky, which looked unspeakably cold and desolate to him, and finally burst into tears.

"O Worth! Worth!" he exclaimed, amid sobs, "you never loved me!"

He took the speller from under his coat, flung it at the corner where his desk was, and then flung himself out of the window in a headlong, reckless way, almost wishing that he might get hurt. Pain of body would have been a relief to his pangs of soul.

Once more in the cool evening air, he became more calm. Above the western mountains Venus shone, large and bright, in a sky still rosy with the departed sunset. The distant peaks were melting away like banks of violet cloud. In the bare heavens overhead a few stars faintly twinkled.

Dew and beauty and stillness pervaded the valley. Not a breeze stirred, not a tree rustled; only the river murmured as it flowed.

Something of this divine coolness and calm stole into the boy's soul. At the same time an unspeakable loneliness seemed to enfold the world and him, like the cold, vast, dewy night. He had never before known the sadness, the heart-ache, of utter solitude.

He felt that he could forgive Worth; that he must love him still. But could he ever again believe that Worth really cared for him?

"I won't try for the prize at all; I won't have anything to do with it, after this!" he resolved. And with his heart still aching with wretchedness and resentment, he went home and went to bed.

When he awoke the next morning, and looked out upon the fields covered with white frost, and the foliage of the October hills flaming in the sunrise, he found that life was still sweet; and he thought of his friend with yearning affection.

"Perhaps he will explain to me about the speller, and make it all right," he fondly hoped.

But he resolutely kept away from Worth that day; it was Sunday, and the two families went different ways to church.

Chase looked forward with no little anxiety to their inevitable meeting the next morning; and his heart swelled tumultuously when in due time he

saw Worth coming up the lane, on his way to school.

"How shall I meet him? What shall I say to him?" he had asked himself a hundred times, and had made up his mind to act as if nothing unusual had happened.

But that was not easy to do; and he was conscious of an air of constraint — conscious that his face was pale and his smile forced — when he went out to join his friend.

Worth had his coat buttoned; and Chase knew that the speller was concealed under it. He, on the other hand, wore his coat conspicuously open.

There was no book concealed about *him*; Worth could see that.

Chase tried to make a little talk; but Worth was reserved and silent. This was nothing new for him. And yet Chase believed it was the spelling-book buttoned under his friend's coat which made him moody that morning.

"He isn't going to tell me anything about it," he thought, with fresh pangs of resentment and grief.

Indeed, they reached the school-house, and the thing which was uppermost in the minds of both had not once been mentioned.

Chase watched his friend, and saw him press for-

ward to their corner, and bend down behind his desk. The buttoned coat was presently thrown open. The speller had been put away.

"I never supposed he could be so sly — with me!" was Chase Atway's bitter reflection. "I am just beginning to find him out."

It was now his turn to act a little part. He went to his desk, and pretended to be surprised at finding his books disarranged.

"I never left them in that shape. Who has been meddling with them?" he called out, indignantly.

"Are they all there?" Worth asked, with a nervous tremor of the lips, by which he sometimes betrayed excitement he was trying to control.

"Yes, I guess so," replied Chase, laying the books out on the desk before him. "Only they're not!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Where's my speller?"

"Isn't it there?" Worth inquired, with an appearance of surprise and sympathy.

"I can't find it!" Chase declared, as if it were a great mystery.

"You spoke of coming over for it, to carry it home, Saturday evening," his friend suggested.

"But I didn't carry it home," said Chase. "Do you suppose anybody else could have got in?" And he gave a searching look at Worth.

"I don't see why anybody should have got in, to meddle with your books," Worth replied, without meeting his friend's eye.

"Has *your* speller been taken away?" Chase demanded.

"No—I—I believe my books are all here," replied Worth. "Yes, speller and all,"—after making a brief examination. "Have you looked on the floor?"

Chase had not looked on the floor, because he wished first to sound his friend by making this little talk. But now both looked together under their seats, and there the speller was found, just where Chase had flung it two nights before.

"Who could have put it there?" he cried, with feigned indignation.

He was afterwards ashamed of the deception he had thus practised upon his friend.

"But *he* is deceiving *me* all the time in a worse way," he said to himself. "He doesn't suspect that I see through him. He shall know it some day, though."

His bitterness of resentment amounted almost to hatred at that moment.

CHAPTER IX.

CHASE ATWAY'S STRANGE CONDUCT.

THE school was called to order; and after a few exercises, Master Cram introduced again the subject of the prize. He had brought to school a handsome copy of Mrs. Browning's poems, which he himself now offered as a prize to the best speller among the girls.

This was in the days when there was a revival of interest in spelling all over the country. It had reached Mr. Cram's school. His first two classes had already been formed into a single spelling-class, which ranged itself around the room every afternoon, just before the dismissal, and spelled the words he put out. One who spelled a word right passed above those who had missed it; and he who remained at the head of the class at the close of the exercise received a certain credit. But he or she had to step down to the foot the next day, and begin the upward struggle over again.

As some of the younger ones in this consolidated class spelled quite as well as the oldest, the offer of

prizes for spelling seemed calculated to interest a larger number of pupils, than if they had been offered for excellence in any other branch of study.

So Mr. Cram remarked, on laying the subject once more before the school. And he now proposed that the old system of getting to the head should continue; and that in future, each final heading of the class for the day should count the victor one for the prize.

"I suppose it will hardly be fair to start with the class as it stands," he went on, "for that will give those who are near the head an advantage over the rest."

As he had invited remarks on the subject from the school, Worth replied, —

"It is an advantage they have fairly earned, isn't it?"

"I think so! yes!" chorused two or three voices.

"I don't see it so," Chase spoke up, promptly.

"Give us your reasons," said the master, approvingly.

"If our present positions in the class showed our standing as good spellers, that might be an argument, though a poor one, for giving those the advantage who happen now to be near the head. But if they are really the best spellers, it seems to *me*

they should be willing to begin at the foot, and give the poorer spellers the start."

Master Cram smiled, and nodded. Chase went on.

"But there's another thing to be considered. Some of those who have earned the advantage as much as anybody have lately graduated from the head and passed to the foot. That might have been the case with those left at the head now. If so, I think they would hardly insist upon anything so plainly unjust."

Now the pupil who had really been left at the head was Worth himself. He knew that Chase knew it; and Chase had spoken with a spirit which could not be mistaken. Smarting with indignation at his friend's conduct, he had made this sharp attack.

Worth was amazed; he could not understand it. Chase, usually so devoted to him, so deferential always, had wounded him to the quick.

"I don't insist," he exclaimed, with heat; "and I scorn the imputation of injustice."

Master Cram rapped the desk with his ruler. "Boys! I'm astonished!" he said, severely.

Chase smiled, but with sparkling eyes. "I am not aware of having said anything wrong," he replied, blandly and diplomatically. "I certainly am

not talking selfishly for my own interest. I am not at the foot, nor anywhere near it. I made a general remark."

"He spoke of the one now at the head insisting upon an injustice," said Worth, his eyes suffused, and his lips quivering. "His remark was personal. I am at the head."

"I spoke of those near the head; I didn't say *the one*," retorted Chase. "I am within three of the head myself. But I'm not so anxious to get the prize that I can't see what is fair and honorable in the matter."

Every word was a sting to the proud and sensitive Worth.

"That will do!" said the teacher, cutting off further argument. "I think myself that it would hardly be fair to start with the class as it stands. I propose, instead, that you shall spell for places, going over a few of your back lessons. Those in favor of this plan will hold up their hands."

Every hand went up but Worth's. He was sullenly chafing under his defeat.

"The contrary," said Master Cram.

Not a hand went up, Worth declining to vote at all.

The plan was therefore decided upon, and the

usual spelling-hour in the afternoon was named for the trial. The ordinary routine of exercises was then resumed.

Very little communication took place between the two friends during the day. Chase, in thinking over the affair, deeply regretted the open breach between them. But it seemed to him better that it should be open; far better than that they should both keep on hypocritically trying to cover up, with friendly appearances, a secret wrong, of which both were conscious, but of which neither could speak.

During the day there was an industrious studying of spelling-books, in spare moments, throughout the school. But Chase did not deign to look at his.

In a certain way, he was prouder even than Worth; for Worth was not too proud to take out his speller, when no other study was pressing, and prepare himself for the coming trial.

To show his contempt for the whole business, Chase sat and made drawings on his slate. Or perhaps it was to relieve his own restless and remorseful heart that he thus occupied himself with trifles.

The hour came, and the spelling was announced.

"Keep your seats," said the master, "and I will pronounce words to you where you are. But when

one misses, let him or her step out and stand in place for the formation of the new class, beginning at the foot. I shall put out words only to those on the seats. The one who holds out longest without missing will, of course, be at the head. Then we shall be ready for a fair start to-morrow, when the credits for the prizes will begin to count."

"Can any one give his place to another after the class is formed?" Chase inquired.

"I shouldn't suppose any one would wish to do so," replied the master.

"But if any one should wish to?" Chase insisted.

"Why, — only for the start, — since the spelling for the prizes really begins to-morrow," replied Master Cram, "I don't object. What does the school say? I'll put it to a vote."

As there were a number of votes in the affirmative, and none in the negative, Chase Atway's strange question was answered to his satisfaction.

Whilst making drawings on his slate, he had really been considering an idea which was to take the school by surprise.

CHAPTER X.

SPELLING FOR PLACES.

WHEN all were in readiness, the spelling began. Master Cram put out easy words at first, but advanced rapidly to harder, after he had gone once or twice around the school.

There was great fun over the first miss. The victim was Charlie Budgett; he went down on the simple word *staging*, which he spelled with an *e* between the *g* and *i*.

"Never mind, Charlie," said the master, cheerily. "You are not the first person who has fallen from a staging. You'll have a chance to get up tomorrow."

There was another laugh when Charlie, who was the tallest and awkwardest boy in school, stepped out to take his place at the foot of the new class.

He was not long without company. Poor Lem Pavode, whom Chase had observed studying his speller with great assiduity, in the hope of starting well for the prize his father had offered to the whole school, failed on *barrel* (which he spelled *barrell*),

and had to take his place next to the gawky Charles.

"It was a pretty long *barrel* you made of it," observed the facetious master. "You made it an *l* too long. Thinking of a rifle-barrel, I suppose."

Lem didn't see the joke. He saw only the discouraging circumstance that he had made a bad beginning for the coveted prize. Two girls and a boy missed *scion*, and filed to their places in the now fast-forming class.

The word came to Worth, and disaster with it. How he chanced to spell it *scyon*, when he knew perfectly well the moment after how it should be spelled, he never could explain.

"It makes you sigh, doesn't it?" said the master. "Well, take your place, and you can *sigh on* with the rest. Next."

Chase was next, and he spelled the word trippingly on the tongue, with an ease and readiness not calculated to soothe Worth's feelings. It was perhaps his perfect freedom from anxiety which gave him good fortune. Having made up his mind not to compete for the prize, he was gay and self-possessed.

At length, only he and Laura Fosdick were left on the seats; objects of envy to the rest, who were

now out of the game, and stood intently watching it.

"*Balance*," pronounced the master.

The word came to Laura.

"*B-a-l*" — she hesitated, and after a little confusion, added, "*l-a-n-c-e*."

"Wrong!" And amid about as much laughter as had greeted the first failure, Laura went to her place, leaving Chase alone.

He was surprised and jubilant. Having spelled the word correctly (though he owned afterwards that he should have spelled it just as Laura did if it had come first to him), he waited for more.

"There's no use of more," said Master Cram. "Everything is decided. Take your place, Atway."

Chase deliberated a moment, then walked to the head of the class. If cheering had been in order, he would have been cheered heartily. He was a favorite with the school; and his generous conduct in the whole affair made those who had lost glad to see him win.

With perhaps one exception. By the intense brightness of Worth's dark eyes, fixed upon his triumphant friend, you could hardly have told whether he was glad or sorry.

"I believe it was understood," said Chase, stand-

ing at the head of the class, "that any one could give up his place to another."

"That was the decision," replied the master.

But it had been so nearly forgotten that Chase's remark took almost everybody by surprise.

"I am going to give up my place to one I think deserves it more."

And he glanced his eye along the class. Every one, of course, thought he meant Worth. This, then, was to be his atonement for the injury he had done his friend in the morning.

Worth certainly believed so; and he instantly made up his mind not to accept the sacrifice. He would show himself as magnanimous as Chase. What, then, was his surprise — what was the surprise of everybody — when Chase walked deliberately past his friend, and did not stop until he was near the foot.

"Lem Pavode," said he, "take your place at the head!" At the same time he swung Lem from his position, and launched him with good-humored force towards that which he had himself just vacated.

Lem stopped, bewildered and embarrassed.

"I don't want to take it!" said he, with tears starting in his eyes. He looked back, and saw

Chase already in position next to Charlie Budgett at the foot, and knew by his frank and honest face that it was no joke.

"I want him to take it," said Chase. "I should want him to have the first chance, even if I was going to try for the prize. But I'm not."

"Not going to try for the prize, Atway!" said Master Cram. "Why so?"

"I can't very well explain my reasons," replied Chase. "But I think I'd better not."

"Then I suppose I may as well take the chance he gives me," said Lem; "though I don't expect it will be of much use. I shan't be here to-morrow night, I'm afraid!"

"I don't see why you shouldn't be," observed the master. "You or any one can learn perfectly to-morrow's lesson, and the spelling will be confined to that."

Lem's tearful face shone with a newly-inspired hope. All — or nearly all — regarded him with sympathy, and Chase with admiration.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BREACH WIDENS.

AFTER school, many took their spellers to carry home. Lem hugged his to his heart, with a cheerful and resolute look. Chase sought him out and walked aside with him.

"See here, Lem!" he said; "do you know the plan I've formed?"

"No," replied the grateful boy; "what is it?"

"That you shall win the pocket-rifle."

"You mean — that I —"

"Yes," Chase declared; "I've set my heart on it. And I'm going to help you all I can. But you must help yourself. You're a pretty good speller; and now you've got ahead, there's no reason why you shouldn't keep ahead. Don't tell anybody what I say; but remember it and rely on me."

Lem went home with his heart all aglow with joy, gratitude, and ambition.

Meanwhile, Worth had started homeward — a very unusual thing — without his friend. But Chase saw that he walked very slowly, and soon came up

with him. Neither spoke for some time. Worth's brow was dark and lowering, and Chase did not choose to begin a conversation. At length, Worth said, in a much gentler tone than Chase had any reason to expect,—

“I don't understand you, Chase!”

“That's not very surprising,” Chase replied. “I haven't understood myself, nor you either, until quite lately.”

“You really don't mean to try for the prize?”

“That's what I said.”

“Why not?” Worth asked, in an humble tone.

“Because I don't think it's worth while. There are other things of a great deal more importance than Pavode's pocket-rifle, or the honor of winning it.”

“Something has come over you,” said Worth, in his full, tender voice, now slightly tremulous.

Chase was silent. His heart was full. He longed for a renewal of friendship, and would gladly have forgiven everything if Worth had taken the first necessary step towards a reconciliation.

That step was, of course, a frank confession, or at least an explanation, of the deception Worth had practised in carrying home his speller. But not knowing that Chase had discovered his secret, Worth avoided any allusion that would lead to it.

"You said once that you hoped I would get the prize. But I don't suppose you have given it up for my sake. I don't want you to do that."

Still Chase remained silent, struggling with emotions which his companion's voice, the recollection of their long and dear intimacy, and the sense of recent wrongs, awakened in him.

"I was astonished — I am sorry," said Worth, "that you are not going to try."

Then Chase spoke out. "*I* am not sorry! It was a great relief to me, the moment I determined to step out of the race — out of the way of temptation."

"Temptation!" echoed Worth, — "what temptation?"

"The temptation to sell my soul for a paltry prize; to be mean, selfish, dishonest; to forget friendship and honor and truth in that miserable strife!"

The boy flung out these passionate words with sudden, rapid vehemence; and again there was silence. He carried his head high, with flushed and excited features. Worth walked by his side, thoughtful and down-looking.

"You think I have done that?" Worth said, after a while.

"I have nothing to say; I leave it to your own

conscience," replied Chase. "But, Worth, I have thought of one thing many times," he added, his voice beginning to break, — "what that wretched sinner, Jim Lathbrook, said to us only last Saturday. About friendship, you know; the selfishness that is at the bottom even of that. Was he right? Oh!"

Chase spoke as if his heart was wrung.

"You said then it wasn't possible for us ever to quarrel," Worth replied. "But you really made an attack upon me to-day."

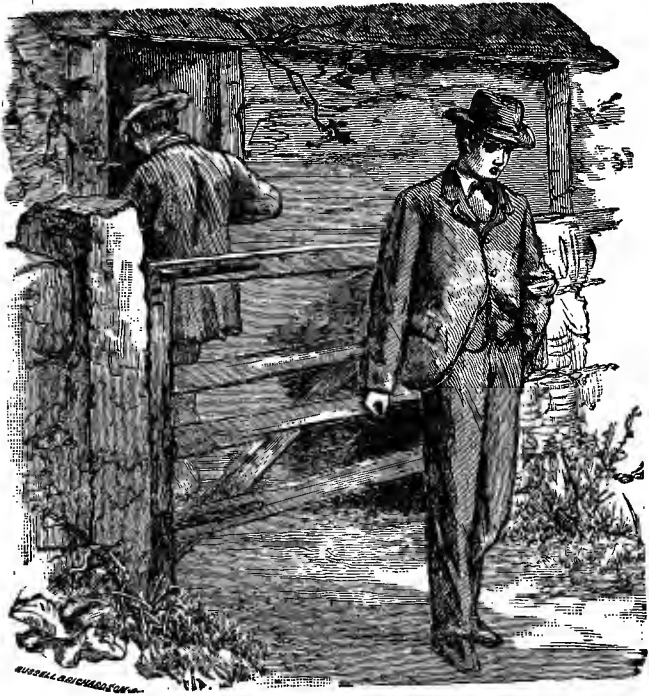
"Yes, I did!" Chase declared, impetuously. "I couldn't help it. I hate unfairness in any one; in a friend most of all."

"Perhaps I was a little unfair; but it was from thoughtlessness. You needn't have turned on me so — you of all persons!" said Worth, with strong feeling. "I don't know what to make of it!"

"I was disgusted and provoked. It seemed such a petty strife!" cried Chase. "But I have got through. I am out of the race. Now it won't be necessary for you to deceive me, or try to get the start of me in anything; I shan't stand in your path."

These were burning words for Worth to carry away in his heart. He started to answer them, but while he hesitated they reached Mr. Atway's yard.

Chase turned into the shed, and Worth, full of smouldering rage and mortification, kept on his way alone.



Chase saw that the breach between them was broadening more and more. He couldn't help it. Something drove him to speak and act as he did. It was, perhaps, the natural revolt of feeling against

one whom he had always set too high above himself, whom he had worshipped too much, and whom he now found unworthy.

“If he had only owned up to that mean trick of getting his speller!” thought Chase, regretfully. “I gave him more than one chance to. Now let him do what he will.”

He remembered with grim satisfaction the corn Worth had engaged to help him husk on the evenings of that week.

“It belongs to him to come to me,” he reflected. “But I don’t believe he will come.”

He was right. Worth’s mind was in too black and thunderous a state that evening to permit of his keeping the engagement. He was not willing, however, to rest under the smallest weight of obligation to Chase; and accordingly resorted to a simple device for discharging it.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. ATWAY'S ADVICE.

AFTER supper, Tim Lankton made his appearance at Mr. Atway's kitchen-door. He wanted to see Chase.

"What is it, Tim?" said Chase, meeting him in the dusky doorway.

"Worth wanted me to come over and help you husk that corn," said Tim.

"Why don't he come himself, as he agreed?" returned Chase.

"He couldn't very well to-night; he's busy," replied Tim.

"Oh!" said Chase sarcastically. "Studying his spelling-book, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," grinned Tim.

"Well," added Chase, "I don't want you to do work that he has promised to do himself. But I'll excuse him. Tell him he is quite welcome to the help I gave him about picking those apples, and that I am able to husk the corn alone."

Tim was only too glad to get off so ; and he went home to his brother with this errand.

But Chase was agitated and unhappy. His father waited until they were alone, and then said, —

“ What’s the trouble between you and Worth ? ”



Chase answered by beginning to cry.

“ Well, well ; something serious, is it ? ” said his father. “ Come, cheer up, and tell me all about it.”

Then the unhappy boy opened his heart and told, amid sobs he could not control, the whole story.

“ Just like one of them Lanktons, for all the

world!" said Mr. Atway. "They're a sulky, treacherous lot."

"I always thought Worth was different," said Chase, inclined now to stand up for his friend.

"He's a Lankton — clear Lankton!" replied his father. "I've watched your intimacy with him a good while; and, to tell you the truth, I haven't been over-and-above pleased with it. You've thought a great deal more of him than he ever deserved."

"There's nothing I wouldn't have done for him!" sobbed Chase.

"I know it. But it's precious little he would ever have done for you!" said Mr. Atway. "Whenever he has wanted you for anything, then how good a friend he has always been! But when he hasn't wanted you, he has been cold and stiff with you. Hasn't he?"

"Sometimes," Chase confessed. "He acknowledges that he has his moods."

"There are some good traits about him," his father went on. "But he never was what you thought him. And I'm not sorry that you are finding him out. Better now than later."

"But it is so hard!" replied Chase.

"It is hard," said his father tenderly. "It is about the hardest thing in life to find that those we

have loved and trusted are unworthy ; that those we have been most devoted to have all the while been thinking chiefly of themselves."

Chase could not but own to himself that this had been the way with Worth.

"He *can* be so kind, so obliging !" he said. "More so than I *ever* was !"

"There you are mistaken," said his father. "He has an intense way of expressing himself, and he has strong impulses ; that's all there is about it. Now take my advice. Set him down for what he is, and make the best of him. Don't be such a satellite to him as you have been hitherto ; he ain't the centre of the universe to you, or to anybody but himself."

Chase sat silent by the kitchen-table, with his forehead on his hand.

"And in future," his father continued, lighting his pipe by the stove, "don't place your friends away up above you in the clouds ; don't expect too much of 'em. You'll be sure to be disappointed if you do."

"Are there no friends in the world?" said Chase, looking up despairingly.

"Yes, plenty of them," said his father. "You'll find, though, that every one, as a general thing, has interests of his own which are first and foremost with him. Remember that. And, as I said, don't

expect too much. It will be a good lesson to you, if you'll only learn that."

A good lesson, perhaps, but it left Chase unspeakably depressed. And it did not tend to soften his heart toward Worth. He thought over all his father had said of the friend he had overrated; he recalled a hundred instances of Worth's coldness and neglect, and exclaimed, in the bitterness of his soul, —

"All he has cared for has been just to make a tool of me, and I have been weak enough to let him! But all that is past. I am nobody's tool any more."

The next day the two friends had no intercourse with each other; and it was noticed that Worth no longer passed Mr. Atway's house on his way to and from school. He even lengthened the distance a mile by going around the road.

Meanwhile, Chase had scrupulously kept his word in one thing. Old Whiteface, the mischief-maker, the leading fence-leaper, was furnished with a hamper when turned with the other horses into the back pasture adjoining Mr. Lankton's fields.

"It's a good idea; we ought to have done it before," said his father. "Avoid every chance for a quarrel, my son; remember they are our neighbors."

This was excellent advice, and it would have been well if Chase could have shaped his future conduct by it.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUSKING THE CORN.

CHASE had help about the corn-husking, nevertheless.

After his talk with his father that evening, Lem Pavode came over to see him.

Lem had met Tim Lankton, and learned of him that there was trouble between Chase and Worth. He came with his spelling-book, and this proposition :

“ If you’ll drill me in the spelling-lessons, I’ll husk all the corn Worth promised to, and a good deal more.”

“ That will be jolly ! ” said Chase, glad of something to distract his mind.

So they took a lantern and the speller, and went to the barn, and sat down before the pile of unhusked ears.

The light was placed on an overturned box, and the book laid open beside it, with a bright red ear

across the leaves. And there the boys husked the corn, throwing the stripped ears in another pile behind them, while Chase glanced now and then at the outspread page, and pronounced words for Lem to spell.

Then something happened which Chase never knew of until long afterwards. When Tim went home to his brother with Chase's message, Worth was mightily moved by it. He had been suffering intensely from the stab of Chase's last words; and he now felt impelled to go over at once and have a talk with him.

With this impulse he set out. He, too, longed for a reconciliation. He knew that he had been in the wrong, and he burned to set himself right. He would at any rate insist on doing his share of the corn-husking, and make an opportunity for explanations and a renewal of friendship.

"But if he still treats me with insolence," he said to himself, — remembering with bitterness and humiliation what he had already borne, — "there'll be a final outburst, and we are enemies forever!"

With such mingled feelings he went up the lane and entered Mr. Atway's yard.

As he was passing the barn, the sound of voices and a light within attracted his attention. He

stopped at the door, which was open a handbreadth, and looked in.

The rustling of the husks prevented his being heard; and the boys went on with their occupation. All above and about them were the shadows of the great barn. But there was the bright core of radiating light, the figures of the young huskers, relieved in its warm glow, their animated faces, the piles of corn, and the open book with the red ear on it, beside the lantern.

The boys husked, and laughed, and tossed the golden ears, and spelled the words of the lesson, wholly unconscious of the dark face out there in the night, peering upon them through the narrow opening of the doorway.

Something fierce and wolfish came up in Worth's breast as he watched and listened. This then was Chase! so long his faithful follower, who had always appeared to him so frank and generous and true.

After declaring that he would not compete for the prize, here he was studying for it with all his might. And after rudely flinging off an old friend, he was plotting against him with a new one. It was now Worth's turn to look upon Chase as a traitor.

"It was a mere pretence, to throw me off my



"Husking the corn." *Page 89.*

guard, that he wouldn't try for the prize. He has meant to try for it all the time. But he never shall get it — not if I live ! ”

And with this resolution Worth drew back from the opening, and fled away across the dark and lonely fields.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE RACE BEGINS.

THE next day, thanks to Chase's drill, Lem was able to hold his position at the head of the class, and make the first count for the prize.

Wednesday, Laura Fosdick kept the lead. There was some changing of places below her; Lem, who had passed to the foot, came to Chase's side about half-way up the class, and Worth was left at the head when Laura went down.

The next day Worth came off victorious, and left but one between Chase and the head. But on Friday Chase easily became first, and just at the close of the exercise Lem walked up to his side.

Only three or four words remained of the lesson. The last was *cancel*, and if it had been spelled correctly at the foot of the class, Chase would have stood at the head that night.

But Charlie Budgett was at the foot, to which he constantly gravitated, like a water-logged stick to the bottom of a stream. The current of change from the head to the foot lifted him a point every

day ; but he was sure to sink back under the weight of the first hard word.

" *C-a-n, can,*" he said, and stopped ; then plunged recklessly forward, "*s-i-l, sil, cansil.*"

" Wrong ! Next ! "

And the word came to Chase at the head of the class. This gave him an opportunity he had been eagerly looking for. He knew well enough how to spell the word. But with a brazen face, and in a bold voice, he gave it, —

" *C-a-n, can, c-i-l.*"

Everybody was astonished ; nobody more so than Worth.

" Why, Atway ! " said the master, " you know better than that. "

Chase grinned, but made no reply.

" Next. *Cancel.*"

And Lem spelt the word right, as Chase had felt sure he would. That sent him above his champion, and left him a second time at the head. After school, boys and girls flocked about Chase.

" O Chase ! you did it a-purpose ! you did it a-purpose ! " they clamored.

But nobody could make him say whether he did or not. Worth did not know what to think. He was puzzled.

The evening huskings and spelling-lessons were kept up all that week, and it turned out that while Chase was helping Lem, he was also helping himself. He was sure not to let any one get above him, until in the regular routine he followed Lem to the foot ; so that he too counted one for the prize.

Toward the latter part of the following week, something unexpected occurred. The corn being all husked, Chase had said to Lem, "Now you can take care of yourself, can't you? Get your sister to drill you in the lessons."

To this Lem had agreed. And he studied as hard as ever. But for some reason he began to fall back. Again he stood next to Chase, who was at the head ; and once again Chase waited for a chance to let him go up and make another count.

The chance came with the word *mullein*. Chase gave Lem a nudge, and spelled boldly, —

"*M-u-l, mul, e-i-n.*"

Great sensation in the class. Lem was pale with apprehension. Worth's dark eyes shone.

"Next!" said the master. Poor Lem had spelled the word a dozen times the night before ; but now, to save his life, he couldn't remember the right way.

The truth was, Chase had previously given him something besides drill ; he had given him sym-

pathy, spirit, that unaccountable something which sometimes passes from another mind to our own, and enables us to do what we could never do without it. From his sister Lem received no such aid.

"*M-u-l, mul, i-e-n,*" he stammered, in a tremor of fright.

A scowl and a shrug were the only signs of Chase's irritation. Hardly anybody rejoiced at the failure, except, perhaps, Worth Lankton, who was watching like a lynx, ready to snap the word if it should come to him, and make a long stride to the head. Worth stood third from Lem.

"Incorrect," said the master, slowly and regretfully.

And the word passed to John Rich. "*M-u-l-l-i-e-n,*" was John's unlucky spelling.

Chase then saw only one pupil standing between him and fate, — that is, between him and Worth, — waiting to go up.

That one was Laura Fosdick. He would gladly have given place to her, even if she had been competing for the pocket-rifle. But she was not; only the blue-and-gold volumes of Mrs. Browning were within the scope of her ambition.

Laura was one of the best spellers in school, and if the word had come first to her, she would not

probably have missed it. But she had had time to grow confused over it.

She spelled it in the same way Chase had spelled it in the first place, then saw instantly that she was wrong, and wished to correct herself. But it was too late.

"I was thinking Chase spelled it *m-u-l-l-e-i-n*," she said. "Of course I knew how to spell it."

Chase threw up his hand.

"What is it, Atway?"

"That isn't fair; she has told them below her how to spell it."

"And you are telling them that she has told them right," said Master Cram. "Lankton, will you spell the word just as you were prepared to before these last remarks were made?"

"Yes, sir," replied Worth, promptly.

He spelled the word in a strong, clear voice, and passed to the head. There he remained, and had the triumph that night of counting two above all competitors.

"I couldn't help it," Lem said, sorrowfully, to Chase, after school.

"I know you couldn't," replied Chase, hiding his chagrin. "But you mustn't let such a thing happen another time. I just gave myself away, that's all."

"Don't do it again," said Lem. "You mustn't depend on me ; for I — I'm afraid I can't keep up."

"You *must* keep up," exclaimed Chase.

He said all in his power to restore the boy's failing courage. At the same time he secretly resolved to put himself forward and take the prize himself if Lem should fall back.

And fall back the unlucky fellow did from that time, rapidly enough. Help from his sister, cheering words from Chase, availed little. He had exhausted his strength, and it was not long before he was fourth, and then fifth, in the list of competitors.

CHAPTER XV.

NECK AND NECK.

WORTH continued first, and Chase second, in competition for the first prize. One by one the other pupils, who had set out with some hope of gaining it, gave up; so that, before the end of a month, they two were left alone in the race.

There was no open quarrel between them; but there was intense rivalry and secret resentment still. They joined in the same sports with the other boys, but had as little to do with each other as possible.

One day, Worth could not help taunting Chase with his former pretence.

"I thought you were not going to try for the prize," he said, with a sneer.

"Well, I'm not," Chase replied, with a provoking laugh. "I am going to get it without trying."

"Let's see you," exclaimed Worth, defiantly.

"You shall have that satisfaction if you'll wait patiently," said Chase. "But don't be in a hurry; there'll be time enough before the winter is over."

It now appeared that the offer of prizes was pro-

ducing very different results from those anticipated by Mr. Pavode and Master Cram. If the school was learning to spell, it was not from unusual study, but from watching the game between the real competitors.

The system worked with the girls much in the same way as with the boys. Laura Fosdick and Susan Webb soon distanced all the rest, and had the field to themselves.

In the strife for the pocket-rifle and "Mrs. Browning," these four gave their days and nights to their spelling-books, to the neglect of other studies. And certainly, in the case of the two boys, far more serious evils resulted from the struggle.

In justice to Chase, however, it must be said that, in comparison with Worth, he was really not "trying" very hard. He did not spend half so much time over his spelling-book, although he, too, gave to it more than he could afford.

Worth continued to lead him by two points, until, one day, they were in a list of words ending in *eous* and *ious*, preceded by *c* or *t*.

These slight differences in syllables pronounced alike made havoc with the class; and at last Worth himself, at the head, failed on *contumacious*.

The word reached Chase, four places below him.

Now Chase had not studied the lesson so much as Worth had, but he had studied it in a different way. He had fortified his memory by association. Thus he had connected in his mind *cetaceous* with *cetacean*; *ostentatious* with *ostentation*; and in like manner, *contumacious* with *contumacy*; the *cy* of the latter word guiding him to the *ci* of its derivative.

He accordingly spelled the word with easy confidence, and walked above Worth to the head.

As he had passed from the head to the foot only the evening before, this was a more brilliant triumph than Worth had achieved when he went above him on the word *mullein*.

It was a heavy blow to Worth. He was now but one point ahead; and the possibility of losing even that filled him with consternation. From that day he studied his spelling-lessons harder than ever.

At last the speller was finished. Worth still stood above Chase; and he wished that the prizes might be awarded then and there. But a week still remained before the winter school would close, and Master Cram decided that a review of the book was next in order.

In going over the old lessons, it was found that

the good spellers never failed on a really hard word ; the more contorted its orthography, the more firmly it remained fixed in the memory. But now and then a seemingly simple word would trip even the best.

Both Worth and Chase made curious failures, that week ; but the words they missed being spelled by others of the class standing between them, they did not change places.

And so came the last day of school, and the last exercise in spelling, which was to decide the question of the principal prize.

As Laura Fosdick was four points above her only rival among the girls, she rested in the sweet assurance that the "Mrs. Browning" was hers.

But the struggle between the competitors for the pocket-rifle was not yet over. Worth still led by a single point.

But Chase now stood at the head, and if he kept his place that day, there would be a tie between them.

The word *separate* swept the class, and brought Worth, who had passed to the foot the night before, once more to Chase's side. Then the master made this proposition :

"Since you are all out of the competition except

Atway and Lankton, I think, to save time, I will now put out words only to them."

This was agreed to; and all but the two rivals went to their seats.

"And now," said Master Cram, "since neither of you can win the prize if Atway keeps his position, I propose that the first miss shall decide between you."

"That is all right," said Chase.

But Worth, fearing to lose the slightest advantage, raised objections.

"If he misses, and I go up, and stay up, I win the prize any way," he argued. "But if I miss, standing where I am, I don't lose anything, and he don't gain anything."

"But neither of you will be clearly entitled to the prize," replied Master Cram.

"Yes," Worth insisted, "I ought to take it, for if he makes his point, he goes below me, and I am still ahead."

"But you don't make another point, for there is no school to-morrow," said Master Cram. "And your position don't show that you are the best speller, for you will remember that he voluntarily went below you at the start, when he was entitled to a place above."

"But he gave his place away," exclaimed Worth.

"Yes," rejoined Chase, promptly; "and I don't claim anything on that account. Let him have it all his own way."

The master hesitated, —

"I think the plan I propose is perfectly fair; and I will leave it to a vote of the class. I will give out words with perfect impartiality; and when one misses a word, the other, if he spells it correctly after him, takes the prize."

This plan was submitted to the class, and there was a unanimous vote in its favor. Worth did not vote at all, but looked his dissatisfaction.

Then the spelling began. The class, the whole school indeed, watched the game with intense interest; some with their spellers open, endeavoring to follow the master as he skipped from page to page.

Chase came near going down on *innuendo*, but caught himself just in time, and slipped in the *n* he had barely escaped omitting.

"It is sometimes spelt without the second *n*," he said, laughing.

"Yes, but incorrectly, according to our authority," said the master, turning the leaves. "*Inseparability*."

Worth spelled correctly.

“*Impenetrability.*”

Chase also spelled without a mistake. Master Cram was about turning the leaves again, but paused to pronounce — “*Indefensibility.*”

Worth hesitated.

John Rich had now had time to find the page, and he put his finger on the word. Lem Pavode looked over his shoulder and saw it.

Now, Lem, since he had given up the prize, was, in the ardor of his gratitude, extremely anxious that Chase should get it, and he was, perhaps, the most excited spectator of the game.

Worth, flushed and agitated, drawing deep, unequal breaths, deliberated long; then ventured, —

“*I-n, in, d-e, de, f-e-n, fen*” —

Here, unhappily, his mind ran off on the familiar ending of the previous words, — *ability*, and he proceeded, as if he had been treading among eggs, *s-a, sa, b-i-l, bil*” —

No need of his going further. He knew by the sensation in the school, and especially by the gleam of joy that lighted up Lem’s face, that he had made a fatal blunder.

Lem could not refrain from screwing up one *eye*, to indicate the letter missed. Worth saw it.

Unfortunately, Chase saw it, too ; for Lem sat immediately before them, looking over John's finger on the page.

Chase spelled, however (so he always declared), precisely as he was going to do before Lem made his sign. And the master said, —

“Correct. Chase Atway, you have won the prize.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRIZES.

THEN, when all was over, Master Cram made a little speech, in which he praised both boys for their industry, congratulated Chase on his success, and reminded Worth that it was necessary one of them should lose.

Meanwhile, Worth had become quite pale; and he listened with a stunned expression, as if without heeding a word.

"I consider," the master went on, "and I am sure the whole school believes, that the trial has been a fair one. And I trust that it will leave no traces of envy or heart-burning with any of you. Whatever irritation may have been caused by it should be forgotten."

Chase nodded expressively. Now that he had carried his point, he almost pitied Worth, and yearned to take him once more to his heart.

But Worth stood stern and dazed.

Then, having said a good word to the girls, Master Cram presented the prizes.

Chase did not try to conceal his delight when the beautiful pocket-rifle was finally put into his hands.

It seemed almost like a dream that the prize which he for a long while had no thought of winning, — which he had even hoped at first might be won by his friend, — should at last be his.

But with this joy came also the thought of his friend — his friend now no more; and a feeling of pain was mingled with his triumph.

He was the hero of the hour; and when school was out, the boys all came about him, to declare that they knew all the while he would beat, and to have another good look at the fine pocket-rifle.

Worth, however, said nothing. He silently gathered up his books, and started for home.

Chase watched him furtively; and, pocket-rifle in hand, with his books strapped together, hastened to overtake him.

The winter had passed since their troubles began. It was now March weather; the snow was nearly gone, except on the high mountain sides; and the roads were muddy.

As Worth was slowly picking his way along, Chase came up with him.

“Well,” he began, in a friendly tone, “school is over for you and me till next fall again.”

"So it seems," said Worth.

"And, see here, Worth," Chase went on, with generous feeling, "this wretched business of competing for the prize is over, too."

"Not very wretched for you, as it turns out," Worth replied.

"That remains to be seen," said Chase. "I told you once — and I meant it from the bottom of my heart — that there were other things of greater importance than a prize, or the honor of gaining a prize."

"I remember it," said Worth, with a strange smile.

"I think so more than ever now," Chase proceeded. "You and I are not what we were to each other when school began; and I'd give a cord of pocket-rifles, if I had them, to be back where we were, with no such bad feelings between us."

"So would I," exclaimed Worth, with one of his emphatic gestures.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Chase, with glistening eyes. "Let's be friends again."

"I wish we might;" and Worth heaved a big sigh.

"As for this pocket-rifle, it shall be just as much yours as mine. It's really a nice thing." Chase held it out towards his friend. "See?"

"Oh, yes ; I see."

But Worth did not offer to take it.

"I shall send to town, the first chance, and buy a box of metallic cartridges ; and then you and I will have great fun shooting at marks. We'll take it with us, too, when we go a-hunting. I'll lend it to you whenever you want it."

Worth gave another strange smile.

"By the way," said Chase, to change the subject, "when are we going up on the mountain, to tumble off that big rock, as we once agreed?"

"I haven't thought of that since," replied Worth.

They had now reached Mr. Atway's house. Worth was going by again, as he had kept up the habit of doing all winter, when Chase stopped him.

"Come, Worth ! what's the use ? Show that we are really friends again by going home the old way for once."

"Certainly ; I'll go that way, and be glad to," said Worth, turning in at the gate. "I didn't know that you wanted me to."

"Of course I want you to !"

Chase accompanied him to the head of the lane.

"Come up into the sugar-bush some afternoon, won't you ?" he said. "I shall be at work there all next week."

"I'll come and help you," replied Worth. "I owe you some work, you know."

"I didn't mean that," Chase protested. "But I shall have the cartridges by that time; and we'll practise firing at a target while watching the kettles."

To this Worth readily agreed. They stopped to talk a few minutes longer, and at parting Chase put out his hand.

Worth hesitated a moment, then took it. He held it tremblingly, and when he seemed about to let it go, gripped and wrung it again, looking Chase earnestly in the face.

"Chase," he said, "if I could only see you as you used to be!"

"It shan't be my fault if you don't," Chase answered, with responsive emotion.

"Whose fault, then?" said Worth. "If you are not what I once thought you, that is something I can't help; I can only grieve over it."

"Well, I have had something to grieve over, too," replied Chase, after an involuntary start backward. "But what is past is past. Let's forget it."

"What have you to grieve over?" cried Worth. "You have played your game; you have won; and well you may say, 'Forget the past!'"

"Why do you speak in that way?" said Chase,

reproachfully. "I think I have as much to forget as anybody. Yes!" he exclaimed, "I take it to myself when I say, 'Let's forget.'"

Worth turned abruptly away, and Chase thought he was going. But he stopped to hurl back these words, with a dark and lowering look:

"Do *you* have to forget that your friend turned traitor and deceived you?"

"Why, yes, for that matter," replied Chase, flaring up; "that is just what I have to forget."

"Do you mean to say" — began Worth, striding toward him with clenched fist.

"Don't strike me!" cried Chase, and he brandished the pocket-rifle.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OUTBURST.

THREATEN me with *that*, will you?" said Worth, in a choking fury. "The prize that should have been mine — that *is* mine, by right — to have it held over my head by the fellow who has robbed me of it! That's of a piece with all your other actions."

"I — robbed you of it!" Chase repeated, almost too indignant to speak.

"Of course you did. I saw Lem Pavode give you the sign for spelling the word I missed."

"Do you think I couldn't have spelt that easy word without help? You disgust me, Worth Lankton!"

It was now Chase's turn to move angrily away.

"That was only one of many things," Worth called after him. "It was all unfair. The master and the whole school were against me. Come! don't run off like a coward. Let's have it out, now we've begun."

"All right!" exclaimed Chase. "And you'll see whether I'm a coward. The school *was* against you; do you know why? Because you insisted on things

that were mean and dishonorable. That's just the truth about it."

"Oh, it is, eh? Then why were you so anxious to make friends with me again, if I am such a villain?"

"Because I wished to be generous. And because," said Chase, "I hoped that you would now come to your senses, which you appeared to have lost the minute this prize was offered."

"It is fine for you to talk of honor, and losing one's senses!" retorted Worth. "What did the prize do to you? A the very time you were pretending that you wanted me to win it, you and Lem Pavode were plotting together to keep it from me. I saw you that first night in the barn."

"No doubt you spied in upon us if you had a chance," returned Chase. "If Lem could do the husking you shirked, of course *I* felt bound to help *him*. And I *did* want him to win; I'll tell you why."

"Do!" said Worth.

"Because, the Saturday night before," Chase went on, "after you had refused to go with me to the school-house and get our spellers, you went and stole in without me, and carried yours home, — and to school, buttoned under your coat the next Monday, — and skulked and deceived me about it, or

tried to deceive me, to the last. But I saw through you all the while."

Worth was so amazed that he stood and heard all this without a word.

"*Could* I forgive or forget that?" said Chase. "I thought I could just now, but I never can. From first to last you have acted a part of meanness and treachery. Now you know all, and all is over between us."

Once more he walked away, carrying his head high, and swinging the pocket-rifle.

Worth watched him till he disappeared in the shed, and then turned and went down the lane, still without uttering a word.

"Were you having high words with Worth just now?" Mrs. Atway asked, as her son came into the house.

"I should think so, rather!" Chase replied, in a state of excitement.

"I thought you were on good terms again when you came into the yard together, and I was so glad to see it."

"So we were, or seemed to be."

"Why, then," said Mrs. Atway, "how *did* it happen?"

"I don't know; I can't remember; it was so aw-

fully sudden," replied Chase. "I said something, or he did, I don't know what or why!"

"I am so sorry! so sorry!" said his mother.

"You needn't be; I am all right; I shall never try to make up with him again. I never saw such a fellow."

And Chase recalled what he could of the talk that led to the outburst.

"It was like firing a boy's Fourth-of-July cannon," he declared. "All the quarrel we have had up to this time was only the burning of the priming. That stopped. Fire all out; couldn't see a spark; everything quiet; you could take it to your bosom. Then all at once — bang!"

Mrs. Atway gave a sad smile as she went on setting the supper-table. She knew his impulsive nature.

"You make merry over it now because you are excited. But you'll feel bad enough when you come to think it over. It's a sad thing to have a quarrel with an old friend and a neighbor."

"That's so," said Chase. "But I've got the pocket-rifle. You haven't looked at it yet."

"No," replied Mrs. Atway, "and I don't care to, since it has been the cause of your trouble. Put it away."

Chase rather ruefully hung it up by the skeleton-breech on a hook in the entry.

"And now, my son," she went on, "you must begin to think of something else. You would have



been taken out of school two weeks ago to help about the sugar-making if it hadn't been for the prize you wanted to stay and win. You've got it now, the winter school is over, and you must think about work."

"That's so!" Chase replied again; "but remember, *'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'*

— especially when he has a pocket-rifle for the first time in his life !”

“Don’t leave your books here on the table !” cried his mother, as he was going to his room.

“I’ll take care of ’em by-and-by,” he replied, carelessly.

“That means, I shall have them to take care of myself, as it almost always turns out. Take them now !” she insisted.

So Chase laughingly went back and got his books, knowing very well how much trouble his boyish negligence often gave her.

Her eyes followed him lovingly. He was a good son, and she was a most tender and affectionate mother.

“After all,” thought she, espousing his side in the quarrel far more warmly than she cared to let him know, “I can’t blame him for breaking off with that Lankton boy !”

And she felt proud of his brave and manly spirit.

Chase took off his school-suit, and put on some old farm-clothes ; then went out to do the usual evening chores.

He had the pigs to feed, the horses to water, and the cows to milk ; and he set himself cheerily about these tasks. During the winter, he had had

his father's help in doing them ; but now Mr. Atway was at work in the sugar-bush with his hired man.

The box of metallic cartridges was sent for the next day. It cost seventy-five cents ; but Chase had money of his own which his father had allowed him to earn in various ways, so that he was always able to buy his own ammunition.

That was Saturday. The loaded shells did not come until night ; and he had to wait over Sunday — how impatiently, no boy needs to be told — for an opportunity to try a shot.

Mr. Atway's sugar-bush was a part of the very woods Chase and Worth had traversed that Saturday afternoon, months before, when they went hunting up on the mountain-side. And now, when the longed-for Monday came, the forest arches might have been heard ringing again, not with loud fowling-pieces, but with the sharper reports of the pocket-rifle.

Chase had always been a favorite with his school-fellows, and now the possession of so desirable a plaything made him more popular than ever.

Worth Lankton saw John Rich and Lem Pavode cross the intervale and go up into the woods above the pastures that Monday ; and he wandered near enough to hear shouts of laughter break in as

chorus to the rifle-shots, filling the forests with glad sounds.

But they were not glad sounds to Worth.

He knew very well that he might have been one of that merry party. He knew, too, that it was more his fault than anybody's else that he was cut off from these boyish sports. But reflections of that sort did not soothe him; on the contrary they added thorns to his sense of wrong.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CATTLE MAKE MISCHIEF.

HE had his dog with him. It was a young dog, that had been in the possession of the family but a few months; a great, gaunt, yellowish-brown puppy, full of savage play.

As Worth was crossing the upland with this brute, he saw a sight which, in his present mood, prompted him to mischief.

Old Whiteface had not leaped any fence lately. The hamper Chase suggested had been put on him, and kept on, when he was let into the pasture in the fall; and he had not yet been turned out that spring.

But the cattle were now roaming about. And the fences were worse than ever. And it chanced that a half-demolished haystack, over in Mr. Lankton's meadow, attracted their attention.

To hungry yearlings that have been fed on corn-fodder all winter, a change of diet is acceptable; and even sober old cows that have been more gener-

ously nourished may be excused for tossing up their horns and growing frolicsome, on a March afternoon, at the sight of an inviting stack.

At that time of year the young grass and clover have hardly begun to sprout; the pastures but provoke an appetite they cannot appease; and hay is hay.

How the drove got over the fence was no great mystery. Even the enclosure about the stack was but a poor affair; and in crowding for the sweet red-top and timothy they had soon broken that down.

And there, voraciously feeding, or tearing the stack with their wanton horns, they were discovered by Worth, returning from the upland with his dog.

Now, Worth Lankton was by no means a cruel boy. But he was very angry — angry with Chase, and everything that belonged to him. The sight of a neighbor's cattle doing such damage would have been irritating at any time. No wonder, then, that in his present mood he was inflamed with unreasoning passion.

Besides, with a boy's pride in a new dog, he had long wished for a chance to prove his prowess by setting him on to something big.

He started forward, and caught up a stick, muttering, —

"We've been troubled enough with Atway's creatures, one way and another! I'll put a stop to it. Come, Neró!"

Neró sprang to his master's side, eager for the sport.

It was Worth's intention, with the club he had caught up, and with smart punishment from the dog, to drive the cattle back into the field where they belonged.

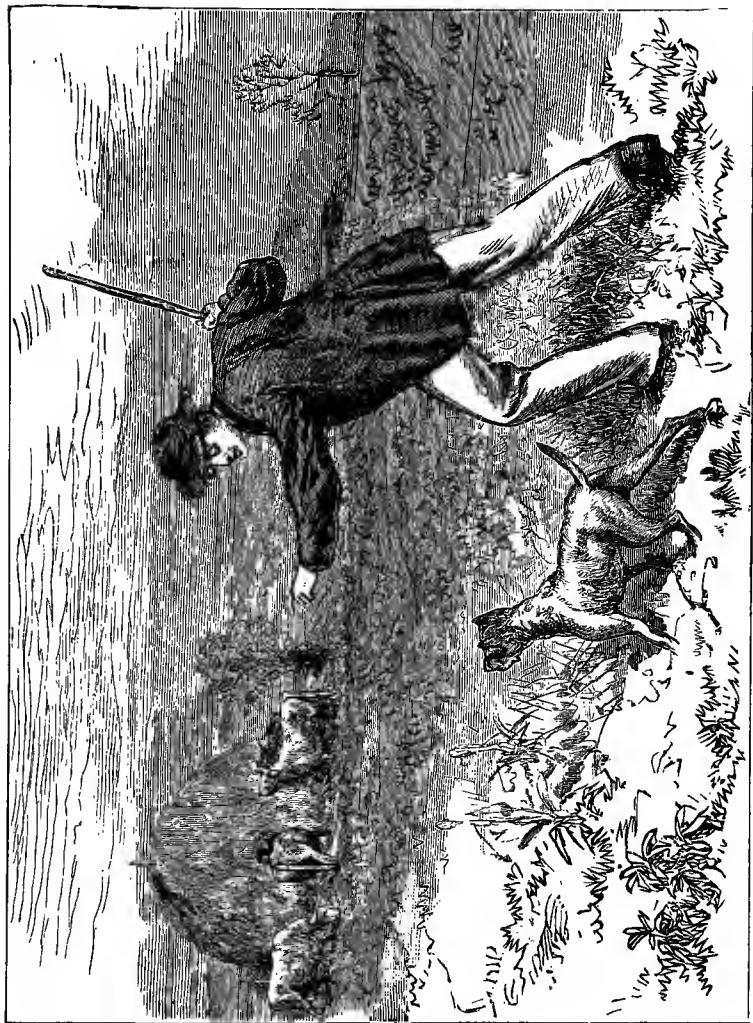
But a savagely-inclined, unpractised puppy is not easy to manage in the excitement of battle, — if that can be called a battle which was a mere rout of the invaders.

No doubt it was a wild triumph to Neró to see the whole drove, a dozen cows and yearlings, take to flight, and carry their horns away in mad panic, while he dashed after them furiously, barking, snapping, and dodging their heels.

It was joy to the dog's master, too. He cried, "Seek! seek 'em, Neró!" and hurled his revolving club.

But the cantering cattle had, in their alarm, started off in the wrong direction. Instead of retreating to their own pasture, they plunged blindly away across the enemy's country.

Seeing this, Worth tried to call off his dog. But



Nero was deaf and blind to everything but the sport of which he was having his first maddening taste.

"Stop 'em! Head 'em off!" Worth called out to a man approaching from the other side of the field.

But the man simply stood still, and watched the show sweep by.

"Curis, ain't it," he said, "to see a crowd of critters like that turn tail for a pup they might hook to death in five minutes, if they only knowed how? So much for ignorance; not knowin' how to look after their own interests," he added, with a droll wink, and a twitch of one side of his face.

The man was, in fact, our philosophical friend, Jim Lathbrook, whom we first saw lying on the sunny side of the great boulder on the mountain crest.

Worth paid no attention to his remarks, but exclaimed angrily, —

"Why didn't you stop 'em? I told you to, you lazy lummox!"

"Stop 'em!" Jim Lathbrook repeated, with a sarcastic grin. "That would be an easy thing, wouldn't it, with a yelpin' cur at their heels, and a yellin' boy with a club!"

Worth slackened his pace, out of breath.

"Ye can't blame the cattle for runnin' the wrong

way," said Jim. "I seen you pitch into 'em; I seen you club and dog 'em. I may be a lazy lummo, but I'm glad I ain't the boy that tries to drive out a neighbor's cows in that fashion."

There was too keen an edge of truth to these words for Worth not to feel cut by them. He would never have believed that a time could come when he would wish to defend his conduct in the eyes of so low a fellow as Jim Lathbrook. But it had come now.

"We've borne enough from Atway's creatures, and I've got tired of it," he explained, passing on.

"Cattle ain't to blame; why beat and dog *them*?" said Jim.

"Would you have me beat and dog their owners?" cried Worth.

"No, not unless I was bigger and smarter'n you be," said Jim, his narrow gray eyes sparkling; "might be dangerous. But I'll tell ye what I would do. I'd drive their cattle into my own yard, and shet 'em up, and make their owners come for 'em, and give 'em a good lesson when they did come!"

"By George! you're right!" exclaimed Worth. "I never thought of that."

Jim's eye twitched vivaciously.

"The Damon-and-Pythias business has ruther

played out, hain't it?" he called after Worth as he was hurrying away. "Say! remember what I said to ye that day up on the mountain there?"

Worth deigned no reply, and Jim contented himself with casting his eyes carelessly up at the great dark boulder, still hanging there on the brown mountain crag, revealed against the afternoon sky.

Meanwhile, Worth's brother Tim, attracted by the barking and shouting, came running to see the sport.

He reached the fence which the cattle were approaching, when Worth called out to him,—

"Let down three or four rails! I want to drive 'em through! Quick!"

Down went a corner of the fence under the hands of the excited Tim.

"Now stand one side, and help hustle 'em through!" yelled Worth.

A minute later, the rails were put up again, with the cattle on the further side, and Nero still after them.

"What are you going to do?" Tim asked.

"I'll show you, and I'll show Chase Atway, too!" replied Worth. "Come on!"

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE SUGAR-BUSH.

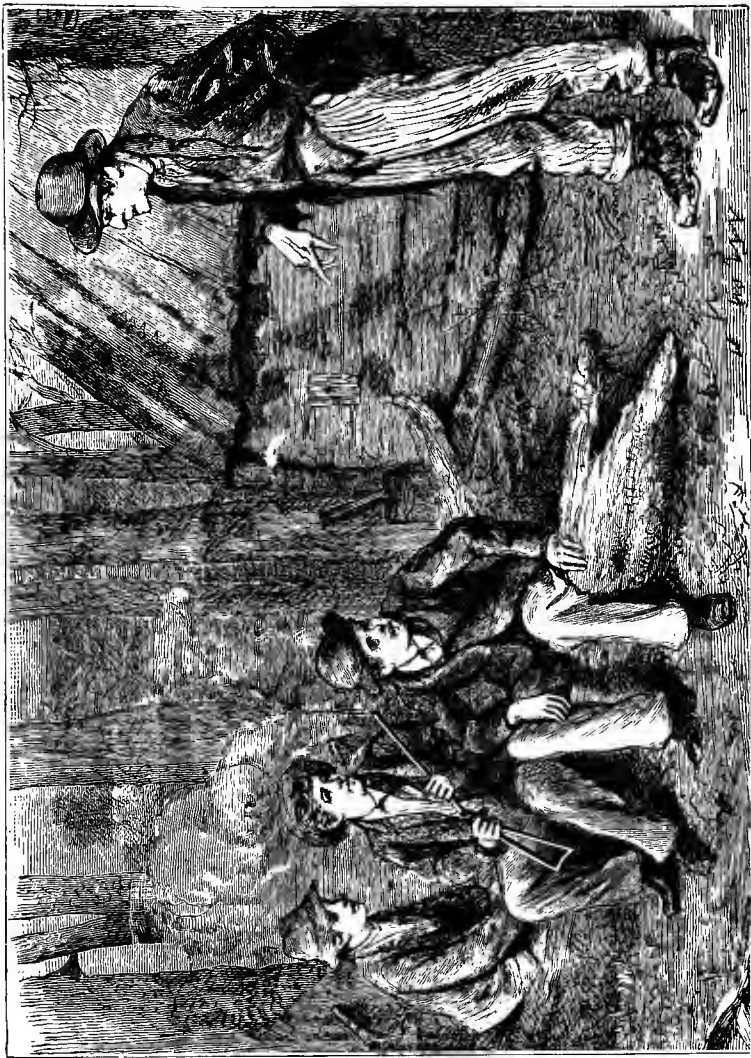
JIM LATHBROOK lounged away towards the rocky upland, glancing back occasionally, and finally disappeared in the woods.

An occasional crack of the pocket-rifle was still heard. It grew louder as he advance^d, and soon he discovered the boys at their sport.

Near the camp-fire and boiling kettles was a hut of rough boards, built to replace a sugar-house that had been burnt two years before. It was used for storing sap-buckets, and for sheltering those who remained to tend the kettles in bad weather and at night.

On the side of this hut was pinned a newspaper, with a dead leaf at the centre. That was the target.

All around were the sturdy stems and open spaces of the great woods, with sap-buckets under dripping spiles at every maple-trunk. The mighty tops, high above, were bare, and through them could be seen slowly-drifting, mottled clouds, like



“That’s a dretful ‘cute thing,’ says Jim Lathbrook, coming up.” Page 127.

crowded fleeces of white wool, with here and there patches of blue sky.

The run of sap was about over for the day. Mr. Atway and his hired man were gathering it up from the buckets in a distant part of the sugar-bush. Chase, left to keep the fire burning, and the kettles supplied, was sitting on a log, talking with John Rich and Lem Pavode, and loading his pocket-rifle.

"That's a drefle cute thing!" said Jim Lathbrook, coming up. "I've seen it afore to-day. The chap that boarded with Lem's folks used to have it; said it cost him a dozen dollars in Boston."

"Would you like to try a shot with it, Jim?" said Chase, generously.

"Guess them little bits of ca'tridges cost ye suthin', don't they?" said Jim, with his one-sided wink and twitch. "I don't mind sp'ilin' one for ye, though, if you say so."

"You may spoil one since I ask you to," replied Chase; "and you're always welcome to a drink of syrup when you're invited."

"What do you mean by that?" said Jim, pausing as he was about to take aim.

"They do say," laughed Chase, "that you make it a point to come this way whenever you go up over the mountain, and that you do manage, you and

your wife, between you, to make away with a quantity of syrup ! ”

“ That’s some of your hired man’s nonsense, I know,” said Jim, with a wink. “ Me and your father’s old friends, and he’s too big-hearted a man to begrutch me a drop of hot maple syrup now and then on a cold day, I can swear ! ”

So saying, he fired his shot. While the boys walked up to the target, he stopped at the kettles, took down a long-handled dipper from its nail in a tree, dipped up about a pint of the steaming dark liquor from the “ sweet kettle,” and half sunk it in a cask of fresh sap, to cool it.

“ O Jim ! you didn’t come within half a yard of the leaf ! ” cried Chase from the hut, after finding the hole cut by the little bullet in the newspaper.

“ Wal, I didn’t expect to,” said Jim, taking the dipper out of the sap and beginning to blow and sip the syrup. “ But le’ me take that pop-gun and practise with it some day, and then I’ll show you what shootin’ is.”

He blew and sipped, and added, —

“ I’m a friend of yours, Chase ; and le’ me tell you, if I was in your place I’d be usin’ up my ca’tridges and shootin’ at suthin’ ’sides a dead leaf on the side of a shanty. There’s game for ye down

there in the valley, if you only knowed it," — sip, sip.

"What game?" cried Chase.

"That yaller pup of Lankton's. He was givin' your cows Jesse, I tell you, as I come up past the meaders jest now."

"He was after our cows!"

"Yes, and Worth Lankton — your Damon-Pythias feller — he was after 'em, too, with a club; and 'twixt 'em both" — sip, sip, again — "the poor critters was gittin' ruther the wust on't."

Chase flared up with sudden excitement. Target and sap-kettles were forgotten.

"Are you joking, Jim Lathbrook?"

"There ain't much of a joke about it," said Jim. "Anyhow the cattle didn't seem to think there was. If it ain't jes' 's I tell ye," he added, holding the dipper ready for another sip, "I hope I may never drink anything so good as this ag'in!"

"Did he get 'em back into our pasture?" cried Chase.

"No; he druv 'em home to his own yard; guess you can see 'em now from the rocky knolls below here," said Jim.

"Boys, I'm going for 'em!" exclaimed Chase. "Will you stay and tend the kettles?"

"I'll go and help you get the cattle," said Lem Pavode.

"And I'll go and see the fun," said John Rich; "and help a little, if necessary."

"I'll tend the kittles," said Jim Lathbrook.

"And when pa comes with the sap, tell him where I've gone," cried Chase, starting off with his companions, pocket-rifle in hand.

Jim watched them.

"I should like to see the fun, too," he said to himself. "But I guess there'll be about as much satisfaction loafin' here by the fire. Quarrels is interestin', but they don't pay."

And he drank and winked.

CHAPTER XX.

THE POCKET-RIFLE COMES IN PLAY.

MEANWHILE, having driven the cattle into his father's barnyard, and put up the bars, Worth Lankton pulled Nero away from them by main force, and with Tim's help got a rope around his neck.

He sat on an overturned measure in the open barn-door, holding the dog, and fanning his flushed face with his hat, when Tim, who had been left to keep watch outside, came running around the corner of the stable.

"They're coming!" he cried.

"Who are coming!" Worth asked, starting up, but sitting down again immediately, determined to appear cool.

"I don't know — three or four fellows — Chase is one! They'll be here in a minute."

"Let 'em come!"

And Worth kept on fanning himself.

"Here they are!" said Tim, hearing the rush of feet.

And running into the barn, he stood behind his

big brother and the dog, while Chase, red with haste and rage, came around the corner, followed by John Rich and Lem Pavode.

Worth put on his hat and clutched Nero's rope with both hands.

"What are you doing with our cattle?" said Chase.

"Taking care of 'em; waiting for their owners to come and get 'em," said Worth.

"You've been dogging and clubbing 'em," said Chase.

"I've been driving 'em up; dog helped," said Worth.

"What were you driving 'em up for? What business have you with our cattle, any way?"

Chase had walked up to the barn; and, as he said this, he stood within six feet of Worth, his hat thrown back on his sweaty forehead, his eyes flashing, and one hand grasping the pocket-rifle.

Worth assumed an air of insolent indifference, and answered, —

"Your cattle had broken into our lot, and got at our haystack; and I rather think it was my business to take care of 'em!"

"Then why didn't you drive 'em back into our pasture?"

"What good would that do? They would break in again the first chance they had."

"That's because you've such shiftless fences," said Chase. "They're not fit to keep sheep and lambs from jumping."

"We'll take care of our own fences," said Worth. "Take care of your horses and cattle; that's all I've got to say."

"Don't you drive any of 'em up to your yard again, and don't set your dog on 'em, Worth Lankton, if you know what's good for him and you!" said Chase, with menacing eyes and voice.

"I shall drive 'em up, and set my dog on 'em, if they're found in our lot again," replied Worth. "It's time to put a stop to this nonsense."

"You're going a pretty way to work to put a stop to it!" Chase retorted.

"Why don't you do something yourself, then?"

"Haven't I done something? Didn't I hamper Old Whiteface last fall? I've done everything I could; but your tumble-down fences have rotted out so during the winter, that if a calf goes to scratch his hide against a rail, down rattles a whole length or two. Mend your part of the fences; that is the only way to stop the nonsense. Lem, let down those bars!"

Worth started up.

"Lem Pavode, don't you touch those bars!"

"What's that?" cried Chase. "How can I get my cattle out unless we let down the bars?"

"Easy enough," said Worth. "Take 'em through the gate."

As the gate opened out of the other side of the yard, into the long private way that led past the house, and over the bridge, to the public road, Chase answered this proposition with a jeering laugh.

"Guess you can't prevent me from driving 'em back the way they came!" he said.

"I can prevent your crossing our fields, and I will!" said Worth.

"Think I'm going all the way round the road with 'em?" Chase demanded.

"You will if you take 'em away at all!" replied Worth; "unless you can manage to float 'em up the river, or carry 'em through the air. As for crossing our land with 'em, that you can't do!"

"Where's your father?" Chase asked.

"He has gone away and left me in charge of things. Oh, I'm master here, Chase Atway!"

And Worth stood erect, grim and defiant, holding with one hand the rope, which fell across his knees, and patting Nero's neck with the other.

"Chase!" called John Rich, "this steer's hind legs are all dripping with blood, where that dog has bitten him!"

Chase went and looked at the steer's legs. He was almost beside himself at the sight.

"Worth Lankton!" he said, "if ever your half-starved, dirty-looking, mean boy's whelp touches one of our creatures again, he dies! I give you fair warning."

"Kill him, and you'll have him to pay for!" said the dog's owner.

"That won't take much. I don't know who else would have such a homely, slab-sided, miserable, mongrel pup as that! But he goes very well with your broken fences and sagging gates; and a jury might give you three cents damages, if you sued me for killing him."

No boy likes to have his dog ridiculed. Worth was exasperated. "Say much," he cried, "and I'll let him come at you!"

"Let him come," replied Chase, "if you want to see him get a bullet between the eyes. Lem, let down those bars!"

Worth made a dozen quick steps to the bars, taking Nero with him. Lem, who was about to obey his friend, drew himself aside.

"I'll take 'em down myself, then," said Chase, "and let who dares hinder me!"

"See here, Chase!" said John Rich. "I wouldn't! Take the cattle home around by the road; Lem and I will help you."

Chase's friends, being less angry, were more cautious and far more reasonable than he. Lem joined with John in urging him not to insist on what they believed Worth had a right to forbid, and at last he yielded to their persuasions.

The sagging gate was lifted, and swung around in the curved furrow it had cut for its outer leg in the dark soil, and the cattle were driven through.

"Shut the gate after you!" cried Worth, from the bars where he stood guard with Nero.

"Shut your own gate!" returned Chase; "and straighten it up on its rotten hinges, if you expect me ever to open it again!"

He was walking off with John and Lem, driving the cattle towards the bridge, when something shot by him, with a growl and a rush of swift feet. It was Nero.

Worth had slipped the rope from his neck, thinking, as he afterwards declared, that the cattle were safe out of his way. But to the boys driving the herd it looked very much as if the dog was launched

in answer to Chase Atway's last taunt. Be that as it might, the brute thought only of renewing the bloody game in the midst of which he had been interrupted.

In a moment he had fixed his jaws in the hind leg of Mr. Atway's kindest old cow, just above the gambrel-joint—the favorite hold of a certain ignoble class of dogs that lack courage for an attack in front.

The cow bellowed, and tried in vain to shake him off. John Rich ran up.

"Keep back!" Chase shouted, levelling his rifle.
"I'll fix him!"

"Don't shoot! don't shoot!" yelled Worth, rushing from the yard.

But too late.

Worth hardly heard the light crack of the rifle as he ran; but he saw the puff of smoke, and thought at first it was a blank shot, meant to frighten rather than hurt.

Nero still clung to the cow; for a moment only, however; then, losing his hold, he whirled about two or three times, with his head at his side, uttering a whining yelp.

"There's your dog; now take care of him!" cried Chase, slipping another shell into the little breech-loader.

Instead of flying at the herd again, Nero went whimpering and cringing to his young master's feet.

"You've done for him!" said Lem Pavode, very pale.

"I guess not," said John Rich. "But he's hurt a little; and good enough for him!"

"I gave fair warning!" exclaimed Chase. "I'm not going to have our cattle torn to pieces by anybody's whelp."

Worth, meanwhile, examining the dog, found a small red trickling stream making its way down his gaunt and tawny side.

He rose up from his stooping posture, and shook his clenched hand at Chase.

"This is the sorriest day's work you ever did!" said he. "Coming here, on our land, to shoot my dog with my own pocket-rifle!"

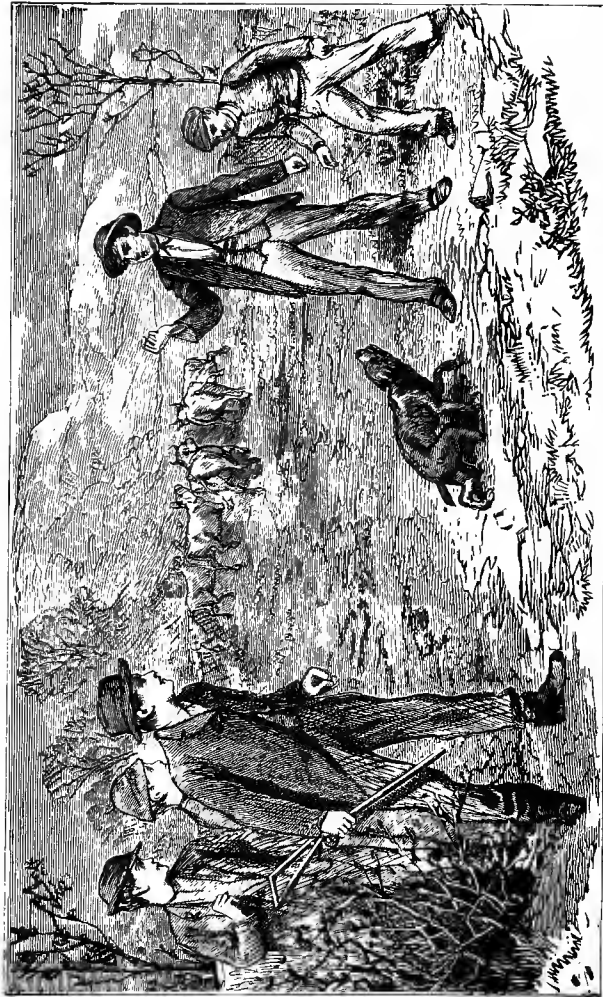
"Your pocket-rifle!" sneered Chase.

"Mine by right. But whether yours or mine, you won't have it long, I can tell you that!"

"Oh! I won't, eh? Maybe you'd like to take it away from me now. You're welcome to try."

And Chase, having started on after the cattle, turned and faced Worth, with scornful defiance.

"It's brave in you to stand there with a loaded weapon, and two boys to back you!" said Worth.



“This is the sorriest day’s work you ever did,” said he. “Coming here, on our land, to shoot my dog with my own pocket-rifle!” Page 138.

“My time hasn’t come yet ; but it will come. I can wait. You’ve killed my dog, Chase Atway !”

Chase was troubled to see the poor brute stretched out there, bleeding, on the ground. It was not a lovely deed he had done, and he knew it. But he answered stoutly, —

“It’s all your own fault, Worth Lankton. You might have kept him back. Now you may sue ; you may threaten to get my pocket-rifle ; I’ve done just what I should do over again, and I’m not to be frightened !”

He walked on a little way further, then turned again, feeling impelled to say a last word in self-defence.

“If your dog gets well, or if ever you have another, my advice to you is, not to set him on to our cattle twice the same day, when I am around.”

“My time will come ; and that before long !” was all the answer Worth made, as he bent down once more over Nero.

CHAPTER XXI.

WORTH'S REVENGE.

I COULDN'T help it, *could* I?" said Chase to his companions, as they followed the cattle over the bridge.

"I don't see how you could; and I'd have shot him if I'd been in your place," said John Rich.

"Anybody would," said Lem. "His father won't sue you, and I don't see how Worth can get your rifle."

"You heard him threaten to, didn't you? Now we'll see what his threats amount to!" said Chase.

He was, nevertheless, greatly disturbed in his mind by what had happened. He kept constantly appealing to his comrades for approval of his conduct, and pointing at the cattle's bloody legs.

The hardest thing for him now was to tell his father what he had done. Having driven the cattle home, around by the road, and got them into their own yard, he wanted the boys to go with him up into the woods, and bear witness in his favor.

But John Rich said, "I guess I must go home now ; it's getting late."

"So must I," said Lem ; "I've got the chores to do."

And in spite of Chase's entreaties, they presently went off together.

"I'm glad *I* didn't shoot that dog! ain't you?" said John Rich ; "though nobody can blame Chase."

"That's so!" said Lem. "He gave fair warning. It's an awful bad job, though ; and father'll be sorry, I guess, he ever offered such a prize to the school."

Worth stayed by the dog, and watched his sufferings, until an overpowering desire for vengeance took possession of him.

He walked on past the orchard, and looking over towards Mr. Atway's house, saw somebody going down the lane. It was Chase on his way to the sugar-bush, to convey the unpleasant tidings to his father.

Worth drew back out of sight, and ran past the barn. When finally discovered by Chase, he was walking fast across the fields towards the haystack which the cattle had attacked.

He pretended to be putting up the rails there, when Chase went by, about thirty rods off, on the other side of the boundary fence.

Chase carried his pocket-rifle ; and that was what Worth was really there to see. They did not appear to take any notice of each other : Worth seemed busy repairing the broken enclosure ; and Chase passed on in silence, although strongly inclined to stop and ask after the wounded dog.

Having put up the fence in a fashion, Worth sat on it, brooding over his wrongs, and meditating revenge ; until, moved by a desperate impulse, he jumped down and followed Chase towards the woods. The night was settling down prematurely, with darkening clouds ; but the angry boy cared little for that.

In the meantime, Chase had found his father at the sugar-camp, and told him truthfully all that had happened.

"Boy !" exclaimed Mr. Atway, with as black a scowl as was ever seen on his face ; "now you've got us into a fine scrape !"

"I'm sorry ! But, pa, if you knew just how it was" — stammered Chase.

"I know near enough. No doubt it was a great provocation. And I was afraid on't," said his father. "Lathbrook told me about the Lankton boy's dogging our cattle and driving 'em home, and your starting after them with your pesky pocket-rifle.

I wouldn't have had it happen for a hundred dollars."

"Neither would I," said Chase. "But would you have had me —"

"Stand by and see the cur tear our cattle?" cried his father. "No; but you could have kicked and beaten him off; no need to have shot him. So much for carrying deadly weapons!"

Chase looked ruefully at the prize he was lately so proud of, but which he now almost wished he had never seen.

"Is it loaded?" Mr. Atway inquired.

For answer, Chase pressed the spring, threw up the breech, and withdrew the unexploded shell.

"There!" said his father; "put it away now, and don't you load it again till I give you permission."

Chase went obediently and hung up the dangerous plaything in the hut.

"Stay and help Tomkins finish up here," said Mr. Atway. "I'll go down and look after the cattle, and do the chores, and see Lankton, if I can, about the dog."

He set off at a quick pace, but stopped when he had gone a little way in the dusky woods, and looked back at Chase, punching the fire.

"There's a storm brewing," said he. "I shouldn't

wonder if we got snow before morning; feels like it. Perhaps you'd better turn over the sap-buckets. Tell Tomkins."

"All right," said Chase, standing in the glow of the fire, by the boiling kettles.

He was glad of something to do; and, taking a couple of pails to gather up the last drippings of the sap, he set out to turn over the buckets while he could yet see to work in the fast darkening woods.

Tomkins carried the sap to the camp; and after making two or three trips, came back to Chase with a startling question.

"Who is that feller prowlin' about the woods down there?"

"Where? What fellow?" said Chase.

"I've seen him twice," replied Tomkins. "Fust time, he seemed to be comin' up towards the kittle from below; he wasn't fur from the log where you fired at the mark."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Chase asked, in some alarm.

"I didn't know but what it was one of the boys that was with you this afternoon," said Tomkins; "though I thought he was ruther skulkin' in his movements. But jest now I see him nearer to. He slunk away from the camp jest as I was a-comin' up."

"Did you speak to him?"

"Yes; I says, 'Good-evenin'. Did ye want anything?' But he jest hurried away, and got out of sight as quick as he could."

"Did you know him?"

"I wasn't nigh enough; it was too dark to make out his face," said Tomkins. "But his hat, his gait, all his movements, even to the stoop in his shoulders, was for all the world like that oldest Lankton boy, Worth."

"Are you sure?" cried Chase.

"Wal, I'm sure enough; though, as I said, I couldn't swear to the featur's. More I think on't," added Tomkins, "better satisfied I am 'twas him, and no mistake."

Chase dropped everything, and hurried to the camp.

He ran to the hut and felt for the nail on which he had hung the pocket-rifle. The nail was there, but the pocket-rifle was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

PEACE OR WAR?

MR. ATWAY sat milking the cow by the last glimmer of the early and brief March twilight, when he heard footsteps hurrying up the lane, and saw a dark figure pass quickly through the yard.

"Is that you, Chase?" he called. And all out of breath with running and excitement, the boy turned back.

"What's the matter now?" said his father.

In a dozen broken words, or rather gasps, Chase told him, standing there by his father's side in the deep dusk.

"'Tain't possible Worth Lankton would do such a thing as that!" exclaimed the farmer. "The rifle must be there in the hut."

"No, I'm sure it is not!" said Chase. "When I found it was gone, I started to follow him. But I thought there might be some mistake; so I went back and lit the lantern, and had a thorough search. It was gone, and Tomkins is sure the fellow he saw prowling around there was Worth Lankton."

"I am afraid it was," said Mr. Atway. "For, to tell the truth, I saw him myself when I was coming out of the sugar-bush. He was in the edge of the woods, and he stepped behind a tree, as if to wait for me to pass. I had no idea he would do so desperate a thing, or I would have gone back."

"What can we do about it?" Chase anxiously inquired.

"I don't know," said the farmer; and Chase could almost see the troubled frown on his face in the darkness. "A pretty snarl we are getting into with our neighbors, thanks to your pocket-rifle! I'll go over to Lankton's after supper, and see if I can straighten out things a little."

The matter was talked over seriously at the supper-table; then Mr. Atway, taking out of the cellar-way an old tin lantern, full of holes (the other lantern was in the woods), lighted a bit of candle to put into it, and set off on his uncomfortable errand.

Chase wanted to go with him, but his father said,—

"You boys have managed this business about long enough; now, the less you have to do with it the better."

So all that was left for Chase to do, was to watch the little moving sphere of sprinkled rays as it accom-

panied his father down the dark lane, across the bridge, and along the silent and dark river bank, until it disappeared in the direction of Mr. Lankton's house.

Mr. Atway went to this interview fully determined to be perfectly calm and kind. But his heart beat fast when he reached the door, and held the lantern before him to find the steps.

The streaming rays fell upon a tawny shape outstretched at his very feet. It was Nero. He did not lie like a dog asleep. Mr. Atway remarked a certain stiffness about the neck and limbs. He put down his hand to touch him, but drew it back with a start and heavy sigh. The dog would never trouble anybody's cattle any more. He was stone-dead.

For a moment, Mr. Atway was sorry he had come. He would have turned about and gone home if he had not thought his lantern might have been seen by the family. So he knocked.

Mrs. Lankton came to the door, looking sadly disquieted at sight of the neighbor.

"I came to see about your dog," he began, in a voice full of pain and compassion, "and I am sorry — sorry — to find he is dead."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lankton, coldly; "your boy shot him."

"I regret it, I regret it more than if it had been the best cow on my place!" said Mr. Atway, setting down his lantern on the step, and entering in compliance with a feeble motion she made; "and I have come to see your folks about it. Lankton, good evening."

Mr. Lankton was sitting in a far corner by the stove, in the dimly lighted kitchen. He did not rise, indeed he hardly looked up at their visitor, but answered gloomily, "Good evening, Mr. Atway."

The *Mister* was noticeable — that form of address being seldom used by these near neighbors when they met on terms of familiarity and good-will.

Mrs. Lankton placed a chair, and the visitor sat down.

"I have been greatly distressed by what happened to-day," said he; "and I don't want you to think for a moment that I approve of my boy's shooting your dog."

No reply from the gloomy man in the corner.

"It was done in a passion, and he is sorry enough for it himself. I trust," Mr. Atway went on, in the most conciliatory tones, "that you will consider all the circumstances, — that he is a mere boy, and that he really had some provocation, — and overlook it."

"I don't see the provocation," muttered the man in the corner.

"I don't mean that there was any sufficient provocation," Mr. Atway explained. "But you know, the dog had already been at our cattle."

"Of course," spoke up the man of gloom, promptly and harshly. "Your cattle were in our field, and at our stack. You should keep your cattle at home."

Mr. Atway controlled an impulse to make as sharp a retort, and, after a moment's pause, answered with exemplary mildness, —

"We try to keep our stock on our side of the line; but that is not always possible in the present condition of the fences. I am more sorry than you can be that the cows got over to-day; but I didn't suppose you would approve of your boys' dogging them, and driving them into your yard."

"I think my boys did right," came sternly from the dark figure in the corner.

"Why, then," said Mr. Atway, "I don't see that there is much use in our talking the matter over. There's been wrong on both sides; and I'd not the least idea of your upholding your boys in the cruelty they were guilty of, let alone the trouble they put us to, of driving our cattle home around by the road."

"Cruelty!" exclaimed Mr. Lankton, in a violent and bitter tone. "Who talks of cruelty? Who shot our dog?"

"My boy shot him, I frankly admit."

"Very well. That's the only thing I care to talk about. Your boy shot him, and you will have him to pay for."

"I expect to do that — any reasonable price," said Mr. Atway, beginning to lose patience, but still controlling himself; "provided your boy will at the same time give up the pocket-rifle."

"Give up the pocket-rifle?"

The man in the corner was evidently astonished.

"Yes," said Mr. Atway, firmly, "the cause of all this trouble — the pocket-rifle which Worth found and carried away from our sugar-camp this evening."

Mr. Lankton started to his feet.

"You mean to say —"

He was too angry to go on; and Mr. Atway put the rude fact in as gentle phrase as he could.

"You mean to say he stole it?" Mr. Lankton broke out, in a fury.

"I didn't say that."

It was now time for the visitor to rise to his feet and stand on the defensive.

"But you mean that, and you might as well say it."

And the father of Worth denounced the charge as a malignant falsehood.

"You won't listen to the evidence," said Mr. Atway. "Call in Worth himself; he won't deny it."

"I don't care for your evidence; and I won't insult my son by asking him to deny such a slander as that," stormed the father.

"Well, there's no use of more words," said Mr. Atway, out of all patience, retreating to the door.

"No use at all, when you talk that way," Mr. Lankton roared after him. "Only remember there's a dog to pay for."

"How much is the dog worth?" said Mr. Atway, contemptuously.

"Twenty-five dollars will settle the hash; not a cent less."

"Twenty — five — dollars — for a worthless whelp like that!" said the amazed visitor. "Twenty-five gimcracks!"

"You will pay it!" said Lankton, following him to the door.

"I never will pay it in the world," said Atway, taking up his lantern; "not if it costs me my farm in lawsuits!"

"I shall certainly sue you, then!" cried Lankton, in the doorway.

"Look here, neighbor!" Atway answered, standing, lantern in hand, a few paces out in the darkness, which its shimmering light faintly illumined. "There are two edges to that tool, and you'd better be careful you don't get cut by it."

He partly turned away, as if about to go, but stopped to add, —

"Sue for my boy's killing the dog, and I'll have your boy up for stealing the pocket-rifle, sure as we two are talking here. Now we understand each other."

And having sent back this menace, in a measured, level tone of voice, straight as a sword-thrust, he walked away, in his little moving shower of hazy lantern-beams, into the dismal night.



CHAPTER XXIII.

WAR!

MR. ATWAY was right in prophesying a storm. A cold north-easter set in before morning, and at daylight the ground was covered and the wild air filled with snow.

"Lucky we turned the sap-buckets over," said Chase, looking out of the window.

Tomkins, who had remained in the sugar-bush all night, came in, bringing pails of black syrup, to be converted into sugar in Mrs. Atway's kitchen. He had let the fire go out and put the kettles under cover. Work in the woods was over, for that day at least; for two days, as it turned out; the snow-storm proving the heaviest of the season, although it came in March. It takes frosty nights and sunny days to bring a run of sap.

But though the storm interfered with the sugar-making, it did not smother the wrath of man.

Mr. Atway had just shoved his chair back from the dinner-table, on the second day, when an ac-

quaintance from the village came in, stamping off the snow in the entry, and dropping his gloves into his hat.

"Well, well," said Mr. Atway, cheerily, "what's the news with you, Mr. Coffin?"



"Something I'm afraid you won't find very pleasant," replied the visitor, unbuttoning his double-breasted overcoat, and taking out a formidable-looking envelope which he had carried safe in a dry pocket.

The farmer turned slightly pale as he received it, remembering that Mr. Coffin was a constable. Chase, who had risen to place a chair and take the

visitor's hat, watched his father anxiously as he broke the wrapper. With a scowl of astonishment and dismay, Mr. Atway unfolded and glanced his eye over an official-looking document.

"*We command you to appear before our Justices of the District Court — in answer to — Luke Lankton!*" he exclaimed, reading at random, and glancing his eye down the page — a printed form filled in with a pen. "*Your goods or estate are attached — Fail not at your peril!*"

He held the document in his hand, looking over it with speechless indignation at the constable.

"Pa, has he sued you?" said Chase.

"It's the grossest outrage that ever was committed!" exclaimed the farmer. "I'll fight him! I'll fight him to the end of the law, if it takes every cent I'm worth!"

"Of course, you understand" — said the constable, apologetically.

"Yes, Mr. Coffin, I understand that you have nothing to do with writs but to serve them. I don't blame *you*. But I must express my contempt. Sued for the killing of a dog that wasn't worth his breakfast, and didn't look as if he ever had one!"

"What can you do?" Chase inquired, full of concern at this wretched result of his conduct.

Mr. Atway waited until the officer was out of the house, then exclaimed,—

“Do? The first thing I do will be to carry out my threat to Lankton; I’ll have his boy up for stealing, sure as fate!”

Chase feebly remonstrated.

“I will! I’ll let Lankton know he has got a man to deal with! Bring my boots!”

“Not now!” said Chase, frightened at the extremes to which he saw the feud suddenly rushing.

“This minute!” said his father. “It’s a clear case. You and the Rich boy and Lem Pavode can swear that Worth threatened to take the rifle; and it was taken that very night. Nobody else was about the sugar-bush; I met him going into it, and Tomkins is sure it was Worth he saw prowling around the camp.”

“Of course he took it,” said Chase; “but it was in a fit of anger.”

“So was his father in a fit of anger when he sued me. But I’ll let ’em know somebody else can be in a fit of anger too; they’ve no monopoly of that! Tell Tomkins to harness Whiteface to the cutter.”

Mr. Atway was not a man to make idle threats. The cutter was brought to the door; and, taking Chase with him, he rode to the village that after-

noon, through the deep, half-trodden snow; consulted a lawyer, whom he engaged to defend the "dead-dog lawsuit," as he called it, and then sent Chase to hunt up Squire Holgate.

Squire Holgate was a justice of the peace. Chase found him talking politics at the post-office, and with some difficulty got him to go over to his own private office. He was an old man, who had failed as a lawyer in consequence of his procrastinating habits and his easy good-nature, but who made a tolerably good notary and village magistrate.

Entering his office with Mr. Atway, and inviting him to sit down, he told a good story or two, and would have kept on talking the rest of the day on any pleasant topic aside from business; but Mr. Atway was nervous and impatient.

"Excuse me, squire," he said, interrupting one of his humorous anecdotes; "I have a matter of some importance —"

"Oh, certainly!" said the squire. "In a moment."

And having finished his story, he took off his hat, put on a grave official countenance and a pair of spectacles, and prepared to write.

"This is a serious matter!" he said, having heard the complaint against Worth. "I know Lankton

very well ; he's odd, but a well-meaning man at bottom. I shall hate to issue a writ for his boy. Can't the thing be settled?"

"I don't see how it can," Mr. Atway answered, firmly.

"Go and talk it over with him ; he'll hear to reason, and bring the boy to terms."

"No, he won't ; I've tried it. He insulted and abused me. He wouldn't even call Worth in, and ask him if he took the rifle."

"Let me send for him ; I think the matter can be arranged," the good-natured magistrate insisted.

Chase, who stood by, anxiously listening, hoped his father would take this good advice. It was certainly disinterested, for Squire Holgate would have his fee from the court if he issued the warrant, and none if he did not.

But Mr. Atway was roused and obstinate.

"You don't know Lankton," he said. "It would be just like him, even if he knew his boy had taken the rifle, to uphold him in it. They're a bad lot !" And he insisted upon the magistrate's doing his duty.

"Well, if you say so, there's nothing else to be done. But this is a bad state of things between neighbors. And it's pretty rough business to haul

up a respectable boy for the larceny of something he has laid his hands on in a moment of passion."

"But it's no less larceny on that account, is it? so I've been told," put in the farmer.

"You have been told correctly. Larceny is larceny, whether the motive be avarice or malice, or both. You are ready to take oath to this complaint," said the justice.

"I am," said the farmer.

The complaint was signed and the oath administered, Chase looking on with strangely mingled feelings, — resentment, regret, and apprehension of troubles yet to come.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER RACE.

HAVING cleared his conscience by offering sound advice as a peacemaker, and perfected the paper as a magistrate, Squire Holgate shoved back his chair with, "This case reminds me" — and began another of his pleasant stories. But Mr. Atway once more interrupted him.

"Excuse me; I must be getting along back. There will be no delay in issuing the warrant?"

"No delay at all," replied the squire, fumbling among his papers for another blank form. "It will be in the hands of an officer within an hour, and be served, probably, this very afternoon. If you will take the trouble to find Mr. Coffin as you go out, and send him to me, that will expedite matters."

"I'll do that," said Mr. Atway, promptly. "Come, boy!"

"Foolish business! foolish business!" said the justice, after they were gone, as he sat peering through his glasses at the writ he had made out, to

see that it was all in due form. "I hope Coffin can't be found."

At that very moment the door opened, and Coffin walked in.

The consequence was, that Mr. Atway had hardly reached home with Chase, when the constable, following them down the road in a cutter, passed their house on his way to Mr. Lankton's.

Chase did not see him go by without a feeling of deep concern.

His old love for Worth was not fully dead. On his ride home from the magistrate's he had thought of their long intimacy, and of many good and noble traits in his friend, which he could not forget, and did not wish to forget. And now to see an officer on his way to arrest him for stealing the bauble which had caused all the trouble between them, was not so great a satisfaction as might have been supposed.

If Mr. Atway felt any compunctions of the sort, he kept them to himself, observing grimly, as he watched the officer whipping down the road, —

"He'll have company in his cutter when he goes back. I had my unpleasant surprise after dinner; now it's Lankton's turn."

There was anxious watching for the return of the constable; and Chase felt, after all, a gloomy tri-

umph, thinking of the punishment it would be to the proud and revengeful Worth to ride by, a prisoner, charged with such a crime.

To the surprise of the family, yet to the secret relief of Chase, the officer returned alone.

In the pure, transparent dusk, settling down upon the snow-covered earth, under a clear and rosy-belted sky, they saw him riding slowly up the road.

"Squire Holgate has played me false!" exclaimed Mr. Atway, wrathfully. "I don't believe he has issued any warrant. What a man he is for a magistrate!" And he went out to waylay the officer.

"Where is your prisoner?" he demanded, as Mr. Coffin reined his horse into the deep snow by the gate, and stopped.

"I haven't any prisoner," replied the officer.

"Have you got a warrant?" was Mr. Atway's next rather sharp question.

"Oh, yes!" And Coffin smilingly tapped his breast-pocket. "But the bird is flown."

"Run away?" ejaculated the farmer.

"Gone a-visiting, his folks say," explained the constable; "to see his aunt, over the mountain. I couldn't follow him to-night. Besides, I have my doubts about his being there."

"So have I," said the farmer. "They've sent him out of the way. I guess now the squire will be satisfied that there was good reason for sending a warrant after him. Did you tell 'em what you wanted?"

"No," said Coffin; "I just told Lankton that Judge Holgate wanted to see him and Worth about a matter you had brought to his notice."

"What did he say?"

Coffin laughed.

"Well, he didn't speak very respectfully of you and your matter. I didn't have many words with him. I shall watch for the boy, and serve the writ the first chance I get."

"I trust you will," said the farmer. "This running away shows plainly enough the boy's guilt."

"I think Holgate himself will be satisfied," replied Coffin.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, to tell the truth, when he put the writ into my hands, he told me not to serve it, nor to say anything about it, until I had got Lankton and his boy up there to talk with him. He thought, after all, the thing might be amicably settled."

"Just like the old squire!" Mr. Atway exclaimed, in huge disgust. "Why couldn't he take my word,

and do as he agreed? He's no more fit for a magistrate" — But here he checked himself.

Mr. Coffin blandly replied, "He is, perhaps, too good-natured. But that, you must allow, is a rather rare trait, and not a very bad trait, either, in a public officer. I take pride in being pretty good-natured myself."

"Well, you are. And it is a good trait in you and him," said Mr. Atway. "He really meant to make peace, and I forgive him for doing his duty in that irregular and roundabout way. But he'll see now that I was right, and tell you to clap on your warrant, or I miss my guess. The scamp will be round again before many days."

"Probably." And the officer drove away in the shining March twilight.

When he reported the result of his mission to Squire Holgate, that humane and cautious functionary shook his head gravely.

"That's bad for the boy! He should have stayed at home and faced the music. But the course I advised was best, after all. It's just as well that you didn't let the Lanktons know what you had in your pocket."

"I suppose I shall make the arrest now, when I can?"

"Certainly. The first chance you get. But I wouldn't go to any great trouble or expense about it."

That evening John Rich came over to consult Chase about a sleigh-ride which had been already planned when the last thaw came and swept away the winter's snow.

The revival of sleighing in March had reminded the young folks of this much-talked-of pleasure, — except, perhaps, Chase and Worth, who had something else to think of in those days.

"They are all ready for it," said John. "Only Worth; he is off somewhere; and we don't want him."

"I wouldn't go if *he* did!" Chase declared.

"But you will as it is?"

"Yes, if pa will let me, and I can have old Whiteface."

"He will let you, I know. Won't you, Mr. Atway?"

John appealed to the farmer himself, who just then came into the room.

"I don't know," said Mr. Atway, after hearing the proposal. "If there comes a run of sap tomorrow, we shall need Chase in the sugar-bush. And Whiteface, too; we can't get around and gather the sap without him and the bob-sled."

"But we don't mean to start till just at night," said John, speaking for Chase, who was not in a mood to care much for the sleigh-ride, any way. "We'll order an oyster supper at Bell's, and stop there on our way home."

"Oh, well, I don't care!" said Mr. Atway, just as the boys knew he would. "Chase can have Whiteface. I believe in young folks enjoying themselves, once in a while." So the ride was agreed upon; and Chase went off with John to talk it over with the girls who were to be invited.

Chase engaged Susan Webb for his companion, and, on the next afternoon, drove up to her father's gate for her, with old Whiteface in his belt of jingling bells, and the rather old-fashioned cutter.

Susan came out, with her pretty rosy cheeks, a jay's wing in her hat, and her sealskin muff and cape. Chase tucked the sleigh-robe carefully about her, for the day was wintry, and they started off in fine spirits for the rendezvous of the party at Bell's, in the village.

"Is Laura Fosdick going?" Chase inquired, as he touched up Whiteface.

"I don't believe she is," said Susan. "She was to have gone with Worth, you know, when the ride was first talked of. But he is away."

"So I hear," replied Chase, dryly.

The mere mention of Worth's name threw a shade upon his spirits. He hastened to cast it off by talking gayly of the route which had been laid out for their ride.

"We shall go over through Mad River Notch," he said; "keep on up Mad River Valley to Meeker's Mills, then cross the East Range by moonlight, and so on down to our valley, to Bell's, where we shall have a good supper, and good appetites for it, by that time."

"It's going to be a splendid night," said the happy Susan.

The sun had already disappeared behind the western hills; but the distant snow-covered peaks were wondrously lighted up with soft tints of the most delicate rose and pink, like mountains of ice-cream. The air was clear and crisp, and upland and valley were outspread in all the purity of new-fallen snow.

"Who is that coming behind us?" said Susan. "It must be some of our party."

Chase turned to look two or three times, as the sound of sleigh-bells following them drew near. A look of surprise and trouble came into his face, which grew dark and stern.

"I declare!" exclaimed Susan, turning her head again; "it is Laura Fosdick and Worth Lankton! Where did they come from?"

"I don't know," muttered Chase, with an ominous shake of the head. "He'd better have kept away! I wish he had."

He remembered that the course of the party led through the village, directly past Officer Coffin's door. He was amazed, and indeed sorry, that Worth, who had once got well out of the way, should have taken this risk.

"They know us," said Susan. "Worth is whipping up his horse. He means to drive by us."

"But he shan't!" said Chase, giving Whiteface a touch.

They were approaching the village. Worth came close behind. His face had a daring and determined look; all the evil in him flamed out at sight of his enemy ahead.

"Don't race with him! don't have any trouble!" Susan pleaded, foreboding mischief, as they were approaching a dangerous part of the road.

"Well, I won't," said Chase, holding in Whiteface, who was by this time pretty well roused by the whip and tight reins, and the sound of rival bells. "Do

you want to go by?" he called out with provoking politeness, beginning to turn out as Worth came crowding eagerly up. "I'll let you."

"I'm going by, whether you'll let me or not," was Worth's rude response.

At the same time he reined out of the track and gave his horse the lash.

In a moment the two cutters were alongside. But this insolent retort and onset were too much for Chase. He, too, laid on the whip and let out the reins.

Whiteface was awake. And he had one advantage; he was more in the beaten track. But Lankton's horse was the better roadster, and he had got the start while Chase was holding Whiteface in.

Whips whistled, snow flew, and the drivers leaned forward and shouted, each striving for the track. The cutters leaned towards each other and nearly clashed, as the outer runners ran into the drifts.

"Don't! don't! we shall go over!" screamed Susan.

They were now on the outskirts of the village. There was a great bank on Chase's side, just beyond. He would have been glad to avoid it; but now



“Just as Worth shot by, wild with triumph, over went the unlucky cutter.” Page 171.

Worth, working ahead, crowded him more and more out of the track. Higher and higher went Chase's outer runner; and just as Worth shot by, wild with triumph, over went the unlucky cutter, and Chase and Susan were tumbled out together into the snow, in full sight of the gazing village.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SHORT-LIVED TRIUMPH.

IT was a complete and ridiculous overturn. Fortunately the snow broke the force of the fall ; and Chase had the presence of mind to keep a tight hold on the reins.

Old Whiteface, at his best, was not a very mettlesome steed, and his ardor was quickly quenched in the deep drifts. Chase righted the cutter, and got it into the track. Then Susan and he had time to look at and question each other.

They were covered with snow from head to foot ; and she had lost her muff, and the jay's wing out of her hat.

"You are not hurt?" Chase eagerly inquired.

"No ; but I'm mad as I can be !" At the same time, conscious of spectators, she broke into a laugh. "A pretty figure we cut, thanks to that impudent Worth Lankton."

Chase did not laugh. He brushed the snow from her neck and dress, saying resentfully, —

"He'll get his pay for it! You'll see, before this day's sport is over! The fun won't be all on his side, I assure you."

"Don't mind it! we have had trouble enough," said Susan.

"Oh, *we* are not going to have any more trouble; be easy on that score!"

The laugh which finally came to his lips was bitter and menacing. "The scamp!" he exclaimed. "I don't care so much for myself; but to put girls in such peril — it was dastardly!"

He shook the snow out of the sleigh-robe, and helped Susan back into the cutter. Then he brushed her muff and handed it to her. At last he discovered the tip of the jay's wing peeping out of the drift, and recovered it, to her great delight, though she had positively assured him that she cared nothing about it, and would much prefer the two wings of the bird he promised to shoot for her.

By this time Charlie Budgett and Lem Pavode drove up, with Lem's sister and another girl, all in one sleigh. The adventure was talked over, and Worth's conduct was denounced by all in unmeasured terms. Of course, it never occurred to Chase that he was at all to blame in the matter.

The sleigh followed the cutter on to Bell's, where

Chase was glad to find occasion for a little delay. Some of the party had not yet arrived, and the number of plates to be ordered for the supper had yet to be determined.

"Go into the parlor with the girls, and get warm after your ducking," Chase said to Susan, helping her out at the steps. "I'll keep Whiteface moving a few minutes."

He paid no attention to Worth, who stood haughtily beside his blanketed horse at the end of the piazza, but drove quietly past him and disappeared round the corner.

It was not long before the last of the party arrived; and then the inquiries became loud for Chase.

"I gave his horse such a sweat he didn't dare let him stand still," said Worth, on the hotel steps. "Sorry for what happened to you, Susie; but Chase was to blame."

"I didn't think he was half so much to blame as you were," said Susie, curtly.

"He shouldn't have told me I could go by, and then whipped up just as I started to," said Worth. "That's what was the matter."

"He couldn't bear to have you go by him in the insulting way you did, and I don't blame him,"

replied the candid Susie. "I thought you were out of town."

"I wasn't very far; and when I heard the sleigh-ride was coming off, of course I wanted to keep my engagement with Laura. So those who tried to get the start of me, and have the ride when I was away, didn't make out very well!" added Worth, sarcastic and defiant. "What are we waiting for, any way?"

"I'm waiting for my driver," said Susie.

"You needn't wait for him; I'll take you into my cutter," said Worth, with ironical courtesy.

"That's a pretty proposal!" cried Susie. "How would you like to have Chase run off with your girl?"

"He may, if he dares, and if I give him a chance," Worth replied, with an excited air that gave him the appearance of gayety. "Come, Laura."

"Let's wait till all are ready," said Laura.

"I'm not going to wait for anybody!" cried Worth. "I'm going to take the lead in this ride, and let anybody pass me who can!"

Others remonstrated. But Worth, angry that there should be any delay on his enemy's account, hurried Laura into the cutter.

The rest followed their example; for Worth had a powerful influence over his companions, much as they often disliked his overbearing manners.

Only Susie was left on the piazza. But now, to her great joy, she saw Chase driving up.

He was coming quite slowly, as if he had merely walked his horse around the square for the sake of exercise. At sight of him Worth's eyes gleamed.

"I lead!" he cried again, tucking the robe around Laura, and then gathering up reins and whip. "See you all at supper-time."

But just as he was starting, a man who had walked along the sidewalk a little ahead of Chase, quickened his step, and advancing to Worth's side of the sleigh, laid his hand on the reins.

"One moment, if you please," he said, in a quiet, business-like way.

"What — what is it!" said Worth, taken by surprise, and afraid some of the rest of the party would lead off.

The man was deliberately unbuttoning his breast-pocket. Worth frowned with impatience.

"I'm in a hurry, Mr. Coffin!"

"I'm sorry to interrupt your sleigh-ride," replied the officer, "but I have no choice in the matter."

"In what matter?" Worth demanded, in quick alarm.

"I've a *mandamus* here," said the officer, producing a document from the same breast-pocket.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MANDAMUS.

WHAT'S a *mandamus*?" Worth demanded, with a look at once frightened and fierce.

By this time, the loaded sleighs and cutters were grouped around Lankton's, their occupants looking with excited curiosity to see what would happen next.

Chase, pale but polite, smiling with nervous lips, was helping Susie into his cutter. They paused, and everybody listened intently, to hear Mr. Coffin's reply.

The opening of the overcoat had exposed the officer's badge on the lapel beneath. He was a carpenter by trade, and did not usually put on that ornament except when he had official business on hand.

Moreover, the stealing of the pocket-rifle had by this time become known to all the town. These circumstances gave a thrilling interest to the situation.

"A *mandamus*, in this case," said the constable, "is Judge Holgate's writ, *commanding* me to take you into custody. Would you like to look at it, to make sure of my authority?"

In producing and unfolding the paper, he had used both hands, letting go the reins.

If the whole scene had been planned for Worth's utter bewilderment and humiliation, it could not have been better contrived. He saw his enemy's hand in it; and after his own short-lived triumph, this revenge was more than he could bear.

He looked quickly at the officer, then at his horse, then gave a wild glance around at the spectators. His companions were not alone the witnesses of his arrest. Men came out of the hotel bar-room, or crossed the street, and urchins in the distance appeared running and hooting.

"You see I am engaged just now," Worth constrained himself to say. "Wait till I come back from my sleigh-ride, and I'll be at your service."

"I can't very well do that," replied the constable.

"Do, please!" Laura entreated, in great alarm and distress for her companion. "For my sake! You know my father so well, Mr. Coffin!"

"I know his father, too, and should be glad to

accommodate you both. But I can't let him go, without I go with him."

"Do that, then!" cried Laura. "You ain't a very large man. We'll make room for you in the cutter."

But Worth was not a fellow to submit to anything so absurd. The idea of *his* going on a merry sleigh-ride, under arrest, and sitting between his girl and an officer!

"How long will you keep me if I go with you now?" he said, quietly, while forming a desperate resolution."

"Not long, if we find the squire in his office, and you can get bail."

"I shall have to send for my father," said Worth. "That will take a good while."

"Yes, it will," replied the constable. "I'm sorry, but I can't help it."

"I suppose I know something of the charge trumped up against me," said Worth, with rising fury, as a full sense of his wrong and shame rushed over him. "It can be easily disposed of. But this outrage — at this moment —"

"Our oyster supper is ordered!" said poor Laura; who, worthy girl and good speller as she was, had not a very fine sense of humor, and did not know why her remark should excite laughter.

"We can eat that for you," said Charlie Budgett, "if it will be any accommodation."

The situation, which had at first threatened to be tragic, was fast turning to comedy; when Worth, writhing with rage and mortification, controlled himself enough to say, with lurid sullenness, —

"I don't care! I'm not to be tricked out of this trip. I'm going to have my sleigh-ride, anyway! And if you don't mind getting in and riding with us, Mr. Coffin, all right! I can stand it if you can."

"Very well!" laughed the constable. "Perhaps this is the best way to settle it. I hope you'll invite me to supper when we get back."

He was quite thrown off his guard by Worth's apparent willingness to accept this amusing compromise.

Worth made a motion as if to rise and make room for him in the cutter.

"Ned!" called the officer, to a youngster on the sidewalk, "go around and tell my folks."

Here he was suddenly interrupted, and, the next moment, he might have been seen flying through the street, clinging to the back of the departing cutter, with his heels kicking up, while Worth lashed the horse.

It was by the merest chance that the constable



"Nothing could unclasp the constable's grip." Page 181.

had caught hold when Worth made that nearly successful feint and treacherous start. But he quickly recovered his self-possession, and refused to be shaken off. On the contrary, he was fast working his way into the cutter.

Then, in his desperation, Worth turned and tried to force his hands away, and got his own wrist captured by the alert officer.

Meanwhile, Laura was screaming; and Worth, not seeing how he drove, was reining his horse violently into a drift. Catastrophe was impending. It was over in a minute. The cutter was upset, and Laura was tumbled upon officer and prisoner in the burying snow.

For officer and prisoner they still remained. Nothing could unclasp the constable's grip.

Laura scrambled first to her feet. Then Mr. Coffin and Worth Lankton got up together.

The horse ran a few rods after scattering the contents of the cutter, when he was stopped and brought back by a couple of men on the street.

"Well," said Worth, excitedly, "you've beat me! Now put on your handcuffs."

"I don't think that will be necessary," Mr. Coffin replied. "I can easily manage boys like you without 'em."

"I'd rather one of us had been killed!" said Worth. "But it's all right. I'll go with you."

"That's about the wisest conclusion you can come to," remarked the officer.

"I didn't mean to upset you, Laura," said Worth, "and I'm sorry I can't keep my engagement."

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Laura, crying. "I ain't hurt, and I don't care for myself, but I do say it is too mean."

She consented to get into the cutter and ride back to the hotel, while the whitened constable walked before, leading the horse with one hand and his snow-covered prisoner with the other.

"Somebody will have to suffer for this business!" Worth exclaimed, in high excitement, as the crowd about the steps opened to let him pass through. "I don't want any one to think I'm going to submit to it tamely. I've done nothing to be taken up for, and I shall be at liberty again in an hour. Sha'n't I, Mr. Coffin?"

"I think it likely you will, if you behave yourself," replied the officer. "But it won't be healthy for you to try any more of your tricks on me."

"I beg your pardon," said Worth, now for the first time thinking to brush off the adhering snow from his clothes, as they halted at the steps. "I

didn't mean any trick against *you*. But to be the victim of a rascally outrage — at such a time ! ”

His wrath choked him, and he merely added, “ Never mind ! ” with a savage look at Chase.

His companions were, in the mean while, considering whether they should continue their sleigh-ride, after such an interruption, or countermand the order for supper, and go home.

“ What's the use of going home ? ” cried Charlie Budgett. “ That won't help anything. ”

“ But what will become of Laura ? ” whispered Susie.

“ Tell her she can ride with us, ” said Chase ; “ since she don't object to three on a seat. I guess I shall be as agreeable to her as a police-officer. ”

“ Oh, but that will be too cruel, after — ”

And Susie told him of Worth's proposal to carry her off, and his defiant offer to let anybody carry *his* girl off who could.

“ I'll do it ! ” exclaimed Chase. “ But don't say a word, only tell her that her friends will take care of her, ”

This Susie did quite privately ; at which poor Laura seemed somewhat cheered.

She had got out of the cutter, and was standing on the piazza with two or three companions, when

Worth, after a consultation with his captor, said to her: "I'll come for you here, as soon as I get a chance. But, of course, I haven't any right to ask you to wait for me. Don't wait, unless you wish to. I'll get somebody to take you home in my cutter, if you would prefer that."

"Thank you very much," said Laura. "But you needn't be to that trouble. I don't want to go home; and I think it would be awfully lonesome staying here; and as I can't help you, as I see, perhaps — if you have no objection — I'll go with our friends; it seems too bad I shouldn't, since everything has been arranged so, and the supper ordered."

Worth had no objection, of course. He gave a sullen assent, and walked away with the officer; thinking that the utmost weight of humiliation a mortal could bear had fallen to his lot.

But there was more yet in store for him.

As he was marching ignominiously, with Mr. Coffin's hand under his arm, to the door of Squire Holgate's office, the sleighing-party, having finally got started, dashed off gayly with flourishing whips and jingling bells.

Worth paused at the door, as the procession swept by in the brilliant twilight; and looked to see what horse and what driver led off in his place.

The horse was Whiteface, and the driver was Chase Atway.

There were two girls on the seat with Chase ; and one of them fluttered her handkerchief cheeringly at the wretched prisoner left behind.

It was Laura Fosdick. That was an ill-timed act of kindness ; although she meant it for the best.

Others followed her example. A dozen handkerchiefs were waved from the departing sleighs. At the same time a suppressed tittering reached Worth Lankton's ears.

He watched till the last sleigh passed ; his features wearing some such dazed and despairing look as when the prize of the pocket-rifle was awarded to his rival.

Then he turned and entered the squire's office with the constable.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEATEN AGAIN.

SQUIRE Holgate was not in ; but he soon arrived, having received a hasty message from his officer. He shook hands with Worth in a kindly manner, laid off his hat and overcoat, talking in a commonplace, genial way about the unusual depth of snow for March ; looked in at the stove-door ; and then proceeded to light a kerosene lamp standing on the office-table.

This done, he sat down in his big arm-chair, and looked scrutinizingly at the prisoner.

"Well, my young friend," he said, "I don't suppose you find this very pleasant, and I didn't mean it should happen."

"It wouldn't have happened if I could help it," said Worth, sulkily, from his chair at the end of the table.

"I can bear him out in that!" added the officer, with a dry laugh.

"Tried to get away, did you? I heard of it!"

said the judge. "What did you do such a foolish thing as that for?"

"Because I wanted to go on the sleigh-ride; I had agreed to, and I had a girl with me," said Worth, with rising wrath at the recollection of his wrongs.

"That's natural; that could have been arranged if you had only come here first," said the judge. "It wouldn't have taken long."

"Arrange it, and let me go now, then!"

Judge Holgate shook his bushy white head.

"That will hardly do, under the circumstances; we can't be quite so indulgent to a prisoner who has attempted to escape. I shall have to put you under bonds first." Worth sat sullenly silent.

"Let's see!" the squire resumed; "you haven't had your supper."

Worth thought bitterly of the oysters cooking at Bell's, but made no answer.

"And you'll want your father here. Where's your horse?"

"Under the hotel shed," muttered the prisoner.

Squire Holgate turned to the constable.

"Suppose, Coffin, you take him into the sleigh and go and fetch his father. You can wait for him to get a bite; and by the time you come back I shall have had my supper."

"But I don't see that I shall have had *my* supper anywhere," remarked the officer.

"There's something in that," laughed the squire; and he had to tell a story of which he was reminded.

"Oh, well, I don't care; I'll go," said the constable. "Come, my lad!"

These two functionaries, it will be noticed, did not perform their duties at all in the stern conventional way described in romances, but used more natural and humane methods.

I trust that Worth appreciated their gentleness. But he did not show that he did; his heart was too hot and full.

Mr. Lankton, with the help of young Tim, had finished the evening chores, and was just going into the house, when he heard the sound of sleigh-bells on the bridge, and presently saw a horse and cutter coming to the door.

"My horse!" he said, in some surprise. "And Worth! what is he coming back for?"

Then he recognized the man with Worth, and remembered Atway's threat, and the officer's ominous visit of the day before.

"What's this?" he demanded, going out to meet the cutter as it ploughed its way along the half-trodden track. "What does this mean?"

"It means that I am taken up for stealing," said Worth.

"For stealing! stealing what? Not that pocket-rifle. Atway hasn't dared! —"

"He has dared," Worth replied, with the quietness of desperation. "Chase pretended he wanted to walk his horse around the square, and went and warned Mr. Coffin, and had me arrested just as we were starting off on our sleigh-ride."

"Coffin!" cried Lankton, turning to the officer. But he was too angry to go on.

"Of course, you know I had no option in the matter," Coffin hastened to explain. "I did have yesterday, but not to-day."

"You had a warrant in your pocket when you came here yesterday! Why didn't you tell me? You have acted like a knave and a traitor, Mr. Coffin!"

And Lankton looked as if he would like to tear the officer from the sleigh and trample him in the snow. But Coffin still kept his seat and retained the prisoner at his side.

"So much I get for trying to do a neighborly action," he said, mildly. "I didn't want to serve the writ; I'd rather have lost my fee a dozen times."

"Then why *have* you served it?"

"That is your fault, Mr. Lankton. If you had gone up with your boy, or without him, since he wasn't at home, and had a talk with the squire, as I advised, I've no doubt he could have settled matters between you and the Atways."

"Never!" roared out the angry farmer.

"So you told me," Mr. Coffin replied. "You treated me more as an enemy than the friend I was; and received the squire's suggestion with altogether too much contempt."

"I was mad!" Mr. Lankton exclaimed, beginning to see matters in their true light. "I believed it was all a bluff game on the part of Atway, to drive me from my law-suit. I didn't think he would dare to swear out a warrant against my son!"

"Well, he has sworn out a very good one," said the officer. "It's no bluff game at all; he is in dead earnest."

"It's a most villanous piece of business!" cried the father, his wrath changing to consternation. "Have you told me the truth about it, Worth?"

"As sure as I live," said Worth, "I haven't got his pocket-rifle!"

"I know it!" said Mr. Lankton. "It's a case of malicious prosecution. But what's to be done?"

"You'd better get in with us, and ride up to the squire's office; that's what we've come for," Mr. Coffin explained. "The boy can get his supper first, if he likes."

"I don't want any supper," said Worth.

"Nor I!" replied the farmer. "I'll attend to this business the first thing. Be turning the cutter; I'll be with you in a minute."

He went storming into the house, and presently came storming out again, followed to the door by the distressed faces of his wife and daughter. He gave Tim some directions about shutting the barn, kicked the snow from his boots on the side of the cutter, and got in.

Mrs. Lankton begged Worth to take a luncheon in his hand, but he surlily refused. And, followed by her anxious and tearful eyes, he rode away with the two men.

Squire Holgate had not returned when they reached his office. But he soon came in, and shook hands with the farmer in his usual good-natured way.

"Why didn't you come and see me yesterday?" he said. "You might have saved this trouble."

Lankton repeated the explanation he had made to the constable.

"What!" said the justice; "did you believe me

capable of helping Atway, or anybody else, to play a mere bluff game? I didn't want to have your boy brought here in the custody of an officer. I acted entirely against Atway's will, and without his knowledge, when I directed Coffin to keep back the writ until I had a talk with you."

"I don't see what good talking is going to do, if Atway is in such dead earnest," replied Lankton.

"Oh, I know about these neighborly quarrels," said the squire, seating himself comfortably. "There's generally fault on both sides. I never got along very well as a lawyer; for that's the view I generally took of a quarrel. Instead of saying to my client, 'You're right!' I told him what I sincerely thought, 'You're partly in the wrong!' Instead of shouting, 'Fight!' I whispered in his ear, 'Settle!' In that way I prevented a good many lawsuits, and lost a good many fees. There was one very funny case I remember —"

Here the good-natured justice branched off on a story, showing how he had once not only lost a fee, but been outrageously abused by the client in whose interest he sacrificed it.

"But I never regretted those friendly offices," he went on. "They have brought me something better than wealth. I keep up the old habit. And it

occurred to me yesterday that if I could see you and your boy, and induce him quietly to give up the pocket-rifle — ”

“Give up !” interrupted the father. “Give up what he hasn’t got ! Do you take my boy for a thief ?”

“Oh, no, no !” cried the judge. “Don’t use any such harsh words as that. I’ve no idea he’s a thief. But he had some trouble with the Atway boy on account of the gun ; and, according to Atway’s sworn statement, there’s pretty strong evidence that he took it. Come, my lad !” he said, kindly ; “this is a mere friendly talk, and I don’t ask you to say a word against your will, or against your interest. But I believe it will be for your interest to tell me all about it.”

“There’s nothing to tell,” said Worth. “I haven’t got his pocket-rifle.”

“And you didn’t go up in the woods that afternoon to take it ?”

Worth hesitated, his features dark and writhing.

“Speak out, boy ?” exclaimed his father. “Clear yourself of this shameful charge ?”

“I’ve nothing more to say,” muttered Worth. “I haven’t got the pocket-rifle.”

“But did you *take* it ?” urged Mr. Lankton.

“Answer his question.”

Worth hesitated again, and then said, —

“No, I didn't *take* it.”

“I was sure of it,” said his father. “Now what is this terrible evidence against him?”

The squire recapitulated in a few words Atway's statement of facts. Then first the father learned how serious the charge was, and saw that there might be something more in it than the invention of an enemy.

Worth was firm, but pale. He could not deny that he had threatened to get possession of the rifle, and had followed Chase up into the sugar-bush afterwards. But beyond that he would admit nothing.

“Then why did you take yourself out of the way yesterday?” Squire Holgate inquired.

“I didn't take myself out of the way very much,” said Worth. “There was so much snow I couldn't do any work at home, and I thought I'd go and see my aunt's folks, over the mountain.”

“When you got there, why didn't you stay?”

“I found they had scarlet fever in the house, and my aunt sent me away.”

“Then this trouble with the Atway boy had nothing to do with your going off?” queried the squire.

"I don't say that," replied Worth. "Father thought I might as well be out of the way a few days."

"Well," said the judge, "I don't see but we shall have to give the case a hearing. What do you say to to-morrow evening?"

"As well then as any time," said Mr. Lankton.

The hour for the examination was appointed accordingly. Worth was admitted to bail, his father becoming his surety. The bond was signed; the constable went home to supper; and the prisoner was free.

"Where are we going now?" Worth asked, as he left the office with his father.

"I must go and see our lawyer, and get him to appear in your defence to-morrow night."

"You won't want me. Let me take the horse and cutter an hour, won't you? I want to pitch into that sleighing-party! I don't want to give up so."

The boy had a wild thought of encountering the party and wreaking some revenge on Chase.

But his father wisely refused to listen to him.

"Besides," said he, "I want you to see the lawyer and tell him your story."

"I've nothing more to tell," Worth declared.

Yet he accompanied his father to the consultation; and afterwards returned silently and reluctantly home with him, to await the dreaded ordeal of the court.

“Chase has beaten me again!” he muttered to himself. “He beats me every time. But I’ll come up with him yet.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CROSSING THE INTERVAL.

AT the preliminary trial, which came off at the appointed time, no facts were elicited with which the reader is not already familiar.

Worth sat between his father and his counsel, and listened with sullen looks to the testimony against him.

He remained calm while Tomkins and John Rich were giving their evidence; but he could hardly keep his seat when Chase Atway took the stand.

The little court-room was crowded with spectators, among whom the slouching figure of Jim Lathbrook was conspicuous.

Whenever anything as exciting as a court-scene was going on in the village, Jim was sure to be on hand. He winked prodigiously, in his one-sided way, when he saw Chase step forward and give emphatic testimony against his old friend.

"Perty good for Damon and Pythias!" he said, with keen enjoyment of the situation. "'Taint much

like the story he told me once up on the mountain-side, 'bout the friends that wanted to die for each other. But this is more the way it happens in life."

It was no pleasant thing for Chase to do. But having made up his mind to do it, he did it with a quiet firmness which Worth's lawyer could not shake.

The defence had little to offer against the evidence of these principal witnesses.

Worth himself, when called to the stand by his lawyer, denied again that he had taken the pocket-rifle. But when questioned by the judge as to the motive which took him into the sugar-bush that day, so soon after his quarrel with Chase, he declined to make any explanation.

The result of the trial was what everybody expected. Worth was bound over to await the action of the grand jury, and allowed once more to return home.

The feud between the two families was now at its height; and I doubt that anybody was made the happier by it, except perhaps the lawyers employed, and a few village loafers and gossips.

Meanwhile, work in the sugar-bush had been resumed; and it continued until interrupted by another storm.

This time it was rain, bringing with it thaw and flood.

There had been a brisk run of sap after the snow ; and casks, tubs, and kettles were full when the rain came. It poured so heavily all one night and day that it nearly put a stop to the boiling. That made Mr. Atway talk seriously of rebuilding the sugar-house, which had been burned two years before, and been temporarily replaced by the shanty.

The sap was still to be boiled, if possible, before it turned sour, and Tomkins remained in the woods to do it.

On the second day of the rain, Chase went to carry him his dinner, and stayed to help about the work until late in the afternoon. Then he started to return home.

The rain was over, and, as hé came out of the woods, a scene wonderful in its wild grandeur met his eyes.

Clouds were drifting low along the mountain-sides, which the north wind and rain had nearly swept bare of the last heavy fall of snow ; ragged mists were rising here and there, and white torrents rushing down.

The valley was of a dull, mottled, watery gray, where the half-melted snow still spread, spotted

with brown knolls, dotted with trees, and marked with the dark zigzag lines of fences. Through the midst rolled the black and swollen river, overflowing its banks, and effacing the well-known lines of shore. The whole was strangely lighted up by a sky seen through broken and flying clouds.

"I must hurry," thought Chase, "or I shall find more water on the intervale than I want to wade through."

The river was still rising.

The snow itself was half water, and the old tracks through it were mere pools of water, a foot deep, all across the valley.

Chase had on high rubber boots, which protected him tolerably well. But it was a slow and tedious tramp.

The water grew deeper and deeper as he advanced, until he noticed that it began to shine and ripple over the surface of snow.

"The creek is getting its back up!" thought he.

He would hardly have known where the river was but for the darker and swifter current, down which rails and driftwood were floating, and for the bridge that guided his course.

But it no longer resembled a bridge. It looked more like a raft moored in the midst of the flood.

"Somebody is losing some rails," said Chase; "and I shouldn't wonder if it would take some of Lankton's. Luckily, our fences are all staked and ridedered; floods never hurt them."

He was thinking that it might be a good thing if a clean sweep were made of the fences in dispute between the two farms, and Lankton were obliged to build new, when he heard a strange noise, and noticed a great turmoil of waters further up the stream. A vast, outspread, tumbling and sweeping wave was coming.

"Something has broke!" he cried, with a sudden spring forward,—"a dam, or an ice blockade somewhere!"

And he dashed forward toward the bridge.

This was a level way of planks resting on timbers flanked by heavy logs laid across from bank to bank.

Chase reached it without other mishap than a cold splash, filling his rubber boots, which he now held up, one leg after the other, to empty the water out, resting his hand on one of the logs, and watching the on-coming wave.

Then first he saw the peril he was in. The flood would undoubtedly rise higher than the bridge, and might sweep it away.

But it was too late for him to escape to the lane beyond. The valley was like a lake before him as behind, and the rushing billows would be there in a moment.

They came, bringing floodwood and masses of ice, rolling and crashing with a loud noise.

Chase glanced wildly from side to side. It seemed as if there must be some escape! Seeing none, he sprang to the log on the lower edge, resolved to cling to it for his life, whatever happened.

He had barely clasped it when the waves came, struck the bridge, dashed violently over it, lifting and wrenching it, and burying it and him in an icy torrent.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FLOOD.

MR. ATWAY had driven to the village that afternoon, to see his lawyer.

As he was hitching his horse at a corner, he was hailed by Jim Lathbrook.

"How long 'fore you're goin' back down the valley?" Jim asked, lounging up to him with his usual slouch, and his twitch of the left cheek.

"I've jest come," replied the farmer. "I've got my plaguy law-suit to look after, and some other errands; so it may be late before I start. You want to go home?"

"That's jest what I want," said Jim. "And I ain't one of them fellers that likes to walk all the way when I can ride a part on't."

"Seems to me it's rather soon for you to be loafing here about the tavern, after the storm," observed the farmer.

"I was loafin' here when the storm come and ketched me," said Jim. "Don't make much differ-

ence to me where I be, any way, provided I'm comfortable."

"I'm sure it don't make much difference to anybody else," said the farmer, dryly. "But if you're thinking of going over the mountain, I advise you not to wait for me. If we don't have water on the intervale before night, I shall miss my guess."

"They say they've had a tear-out up Cold Crick already," said Jim. "And there's more ice left in Mad River Valley than was ever known afore, at this season of the year. We shall have a spill-over when that comes. But I guess I can git home fust, if I ride part way."

"There's Pavode's wagon," said Mr. Atway. "Likely he'll be going before I do."

"Lowmy Pavode! I'll hook on to him if he'll *low me*," laughed Jim.

It was a heavy farm-wagon with muddy wheels, and a boy sitting on the seat holding the reins. The boy was Lem.

"Where's your dad?" asked Jim, lounging up to him.

"He's in the store there," said Lem. "I'm waiting for him."

"So 'm I," said Jim, with a merry wink and twitch. "I'm goin' to ride with him. Maybe him

and you don't know it, but it's a fact; in case you start soon enough to suit my convenience."

Presently Mr. Pavode came out of the store with some bundles, which he put into the wagon.

"You'll be welcome to ride," he said to Lathbrook. "But I've got to drive around by the harness-maker's first."

"All right!" said Jim, and got in on the seat with Lem and his father.

It was half an hour before Pavode was at last ready to start for home.

Just as they were driving off, Mr. Atway hurried over towards them across the muddy street.

"According to all accounts," he said, "we're going to have the biggest flood in the intervale we've had for some years. If you cross, Jim, I wish you'd try to see my boy — if he hasn't already come home — and tell him to look out for himself. He was with Tomkins in the sugar-bush."

"I don't go that way 'cept in good weather, and I thought I should try the long way, round by the lower road, to-day," said Jim. "But I'll look after your boy, if you're anxious about him."

"I'm not particularly anxious," replied the farmer. "He knows we've been expecting high water, and preparing for it. But boys are heedless."

"I'll see him," Jim promised, as he rode away.

"Farmers are pooty gener'ly prepared for a flood, in our valley, I guess," said Mr. Pavode, whipping his horses along the miry track.

"Chase will know enough to take care of himself," Lem suggested.

"He'll know enough if anybody does," said Lathbrook. "Smart, Chase is! Best speller in school! I s'pose you know about his quarrel with his old friend, his Damon-and-Pythias crony, Worth Lankton?" And all of one side of Jim's face gave a tremendous jerk.

"I know of that to my sorrow!" said the school-committee man. "'Twas me that offered the pocket-rifle as a prize. I'd no idee it would lead to any sich trouble!"

"'Twas kind of a queer thing to offer as a prize to school-boys!" remarked Jim. "Some folks think all sorts of pistols, and sich-like trash, is dangerous, and won't let their boys touch 'em."

"A good many blamed me on that account," replied Pavode. "But if boys want to play with 'em and git hurt, they will, spite of ye; and my idee is, ye may as well trust a boy with a gun, and l'arn him to be careful, as try to keep everything of the kind away from him."

"Jest as you'd learn a boy to swim, 'stead o' tryin' to keep him away from the water," remarked Lathbrook.

"Edzaclly! And how did I know Chase would go and shoot Lankton's dog? or that Worth would spite him by hookin' the rifle? I don't see what they should blame it on me for!" said the unhappy committee-man. "I s'pose now, if Worth goes to jail, or if the two families go to murderin' each other, I shall have to shoulder the responsibility."

"Guess th' aint much danger of Worth's goin' to jail," said Jim. "He'll git off some way. Fellers do. But it's a perty good joke, I call it. Sich friends as them two boys was till they had somethin' to quarrel over! I told 'em how 'twould be!"

He was winking excitedly with one eye, when the other chanced to turn towards the valley, which now came into view beyond an orchard they were passing.

"Look here, Pavode!" said he, sobering instantly. "River's gittin' high! Don't ketch me crossin' the intervale to-night!"

"You'll have to go in a boat, unless you go pretty soon," said Lem. "Hark! what's that noise?"

It was the coming flood, the far-off roar of which was heard sweeping down the valley. In a minute

the advance waves appeared, bearing driftwood and ice, and rolling high and wide over the river banks.

The wild clouds flying before the south wind, the torn vapors drifting along the mountain sides, the black river winding through a plain covered with watery snow, and the turbid, rushing flood spreading out, bow-shaped, like some huge creature with plunging beak and wings covering the intervalle, ~~all~~ all this formed a scene which might well make those viewing it from the high road hold their breath with awe.

"I never see the like o' that afore!" said Jim, breaking the momentary silence. "Dams and everything has give way!"

"Oh, see that fence go!" exclaimed the excited Lem. "Just like kindling-wood!"

"Won't be much but trees and bushes left stickin' out of the water if it keeps comin' as fast as it spreads out," said Jim.

"Oh!" cried Lem again. "Did you see? When it came to the bend in the river, it didn't turn out for it at all, but jumped right over! See those bushes bend and shake as the driftwood strikes 'em!"

Mr. Pavode, who had unconsciously stopped his horses, now whipped up again vigorously.

"There'll be damage done all along, in spite of everything!" he exclaimed. "Shouldn't wonder if some of my fences would go."

"And the Lanktons! Won't they ketch it down in the intervale there?" said Jim.

"Their buildings stand pooty high, but some of their shiftlessness outside will git wiped out, I guess," said the farmer, laying on his whip. "Shouldn't wonder if they'd need our help."

"Whip as fast as you may, the water's outrunnin' us," said Jim. "It goes like a racehorse! It didn't look as if it went so fast, did it? Glad I ain't crossin' the valley!"

"I hope Chase ain't!" said Lem. "It's down opposite Atway's by this time. Do hurry, pa!"

"I can't git along much faster in this 'ere mud," replied his father.

"It seems to be tamin' down; ye can't hardly hear it now," said Jim.

"That's because it's further off, and the orchards hide it again," said Lem. "Gracious! don't the mud fly?"

"From heels and wheels!" said Jim. "I'm git-tin' it on the end of the seat here! What's the use of hurryin' now? Don't do no good. Fun's over."

"'Taint you I'm hurryin' for," said the farmer, who had by this time got his horses into a canter, notwithstanding the flying mud from tires and hoofs.

"I don't believe I shall git home to-night. Might as well have staid to the village," said Jim. "But then I shouldn't have seen the fun."

Once more Lem made his excited outcry as they passed an intervening orchard.

"Oh! Look! Atway's bridge! There ain't a sign of it anywhere!"

The bridge had, in fact, gone, and Chase with it.

He had clung to the log even while the flood overwhelmed and uptore the timbers, and still for a moment afterwards, until he was forced to loose his hold in that rolling chaos.

It was a strange and terrible moment, during which he thought of many things tumultuously, — his parents, his home, the winning of the prize, which was so much to him once, but nothing to him now, and his wicked quarrel and triumph over his friend.

Then he was hurled forward amidst the trembling fragments.

That the bridge had vanished was plain enough to be seen. But who could know what human life was imperilled in its ruins?



“He had clung to the log even while the flood overwhelmed and uprooted the timbers.” Page 210.

CHAPTER XXX.

CATCHING DRIFTWOOD.

MR. LANKTON'S house and outbuildings were on a gentle elevation of land which the spring floods seldom reached. Only once or twice had the boys seen the water come into this barnyard; and though nearer the river, the house stood higher still.

Anticipating an overflow, Mr. Lankton had that afternoon got his stock into the yard, and otherwise provided for emergencies.

Tim was jubilant. He watched the gradual creeping of the waters over the banks, and hoped it would be the biggest flood ever was.

Even to Worth there was something pleasantly exciting in the wild aspect of the heavens and earth after the storm. Ever since the night of his arrest, there had been a black cloud on his spirit, but now it began to lift.

He was out watching the river, when some fence-rails, with other driftwood, came floating down. A sudden thought striking him, he ran to the house.

"Get the clothes-line, Tim!" he called to his brother. "We'll save some of those rails. They'll come in play when we mend our fences."

The broken fences, which, alas, had been one principal cause of his trouble, were on the boy's conscience; and he had determined that they should receive some repairs that spring.

"How can you?" said Tim, bringing the line.

"I'll show you!"

Worth overhauled a box of old junk in the shed till he found something that suited his purpose. It was the handle of an ancient andiron. With this in one hand, and the line in the other, he ran back to the river.

"Oh, there's a splendid big rail!" cried Tim, pointing up the river. "Play it's a whale, and you're going to harpoon him!"

"Hold on to that end of the line!" cried Worth.

At the same time, he tied the other end to his iron. Then, having seen that the coils were free to run out, he waited for the rail.

The stream, usually narrow and gentle enough, was broad and dark and swift, and so high that the boys already stood ankle-deep in their rubber boots, well back on the slushy bank. The rail was then three or four rods off, shooting rapidly down.

As it came opposite, Worth hurled his iron. The coils did not unwind properly, and it fell short. Another fling, a few rods farther down the stream, sent it just beyond the rail.

"You've harpooned him!" yelled the gleeful Tim. "Now haul him in?"

The iron, as it splashed into the water, had carried the line over the rail, which it caught and held by its weight. Worth began to haul in gently, causing the rail to swing in the current towards the shore. There, with Tim's help, it was got out.

It was exciting sport; and in pursuit of it, the boys followed up the river bank, along by the edge of the orchard, until they were at some distance from the house.

Whenever any piece of driftwood worth saving floated by, Worth would fling his iron, and generally draw in his prize. The sticks and rails secured in this way were laid up on the somewhat higher ground of the orchard behind them, until, at the foot of an old russet-tree, they had got a goodly pile.

Meanwhile the water continued rising, and Worth stood half the time shin-deep in his rubber boots.

They often had some trouble in getting an unruly "whale"—as Tim called every large stick—out of the water. At length Worth said,—

“Run to the barn, and get the long-handled pitchfork.”

“Oh yes!” cried Tim, “we can spear them with that.” And off he started.

Worth now had sole care of the line; and to avoid the risk of losing it when he flung his iron at a distance, he tied the opposite end to a low branch of the apple-tree.

As he did so, he remembered that limb; he remembered that it was the same tree he and Chase had climbed, with ladders and baskets, to pick the russets that last Saturday afternoon when they were friends.

A sudden recollection of what had happened since then came over him. He gave a great gulp to keep down his rising heart, and saw the knot, which he was slipping up on the limb, through a gust of tears. Tears of grief and wrath and remorse; grief for the loss of his happiness and friendship; wrath for the wrongs he had suffered, and remorse for his own folly.

How beautiful that friendship was! How happy they were that day, picking the golden-brown russets in the October sunshine! What a dream it seemed, and how madly, how utterly it had been destroyed!

"He has beat me every time!" the boy muttered, giving a savage pull at the cord.

Ah, could he have gone back to the time of that russet-apple picking! But that was impossible. He had been too bitterly wronged.

Much as he missed that one too-faithful, too-devoted friend, he was not sure that he cared to have him back. His strong love had turned to stronger hate.

The tumult of his thoughts, the splashing of his own feet in the water, and the rush of the swift river, had prevented him from giving heed to another noise fast approaching, and drowning all lesser sounds.

But now it grew upon his ear; and casting his eye up the valley, he saw the great wave coming. He had no thought of danger to himself, though the flood might overtake him and rise over his rubber boots before he could escape through the orchard. But what he was anxious about chiefly was the safety of his pile of driftwood, which had cost him such pains.

His first thought was to take a turn with his line about a few of the best rails, and leave them moored. But he saw in a few moments that he was too late for that. He had barely time to save himself.

“Go back! go back!” he shouted to Tim, coming with the fork on the farther side of the orchard. “The water! the water!”

Tim saw it through the trees. At the same time he saw his brother spring into the apple-tree. That was enough. The boy turned and fled, shrieking, — “The water! the water! the flood!”

Worth had hardly time to draw up his legs, with the heavy rubber boots on, when the first strong rush of the shooting rapids swept under him.

“This beats all the floods yet!” he said to himself, securing a position on the limb to which his line was fast. “If I could only save some of that driftwood.”

But instead of saving more, he was in a way to lose what he had already got. His pile was beginning to loosen and separate, and float off in the waves that ran up into the orchard.

“That must be Atway’s bridge that has gone to pieces, and I’m glad of it!” he muttered vindictively.

Just then a faint scream rose above the noise of the flood, and he saw something like a human form clinging to a half-submerged plank. It was coming rapidly down in the main current, and would pass within three or four rods of the tree Worth had climbed.

He had already reached for his line under the limb, and partly pulled it in. A few yards more drawn up, and the iron would be in his hand.

His first thrill of surprise and horror was followed by a swift resolve to save a human life. Up came the iron. He grasped it, ready to fling, when he recognized a head rising above the waves, and an imploring and terrified face turned towards him.

"It's Chase?" he said, with a sudden and terrible revulsion of feeling. "Let him go!"

Chase had not seen Worth in the tree, but was calling for help in a blind and frantic way.

He had tried in vain to get his plank out of the main current into shallower and more tranquil water. But he durst not abandon it, for, with his clumsy rubber boots on, there was small chance of swimming in such a torrent.

He was, moreover, aware that something had happened to one of his legs. He had not thought, at first, of any pain there, but in his struggle among the driftwood and broken timbers, he found, to his dismay, that it was hurt and partly disabled.

He was free from the driftwood now, and so near Lankton's orchard just ahead! If he could have succeeded in kicking off his boots, and had two good legs at his service, he might at least have

reached a tree. As it was, he continued to drift helplessly down.

Suddenly a shout answered his call, — a well-known, strong, penetrating voice, from the edge of the orchard, as he was borne past.

“Here, Chase! look alive!”

He glanced up, and saw his foe in the apple-tree, safe above the flood.

A missile was swinging from a short end of a line in Worth’s hand. He was preparing to heave it, Chase believed, at him.

“O Worth!” he shrieked out in his agony.

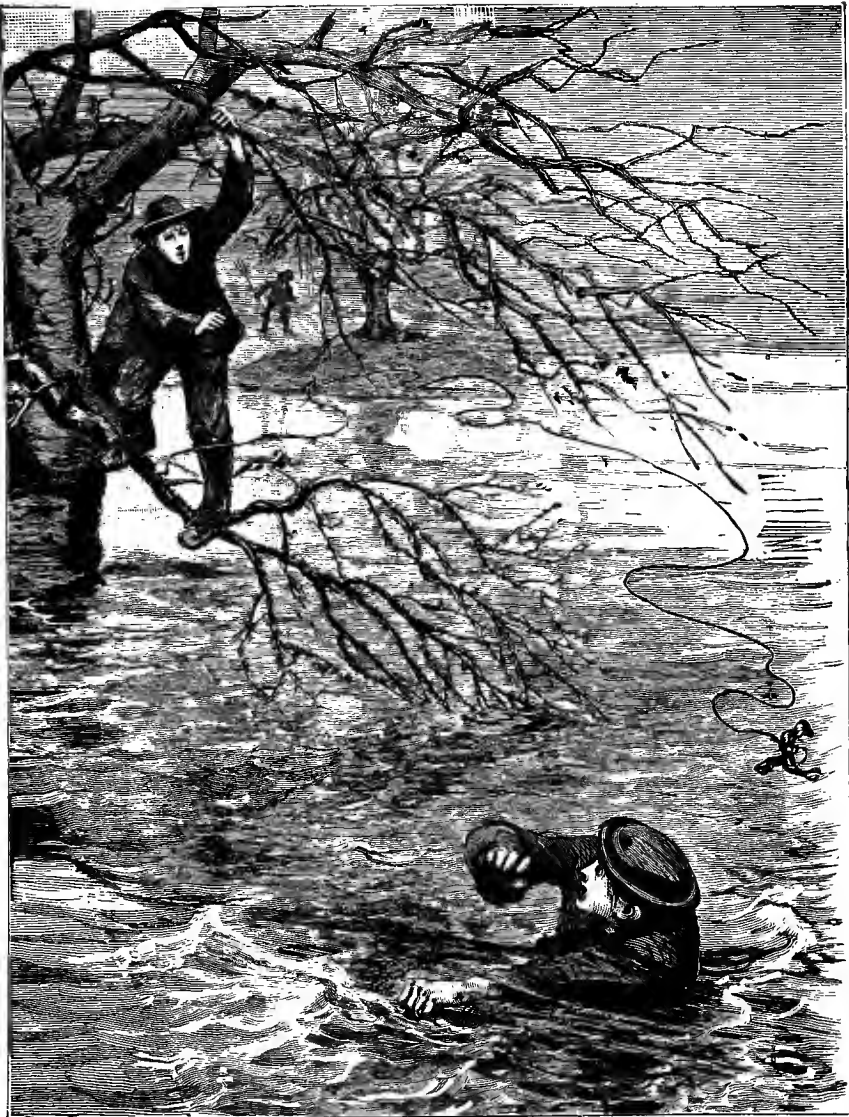
“Catch this!” cried Worth, and hurled his iron.

It flew high over Chase’s head, just before him, and falling with a splash into the river, brought the line down across the plank, within his reach.

With a sudden heart-leap of hope and gratitude, Chase saw the flying line, and recognized Worth’s real intent.

For Worth had not obeyed his first impulse to drop the iron back into the water, and watch from the tree while his enemy went down. Hard as his heart was towards him, it was not so hard as that.

“Hold on to it!” he shouted, “I’ll haul you in!” Chase grasped the line and clung fast. Then Worth laid his breast upon the limb, and with his arms



“ With a sudden heart-leap of hope and gratitude, Chase saw the flying line, and recognized Worth’s real intent.” Page 218.

extended under it, hauled, hand over hand, with all his might. Plank and rider swept around in the current, and moved slowly up towards the tree.

"Now you're safe!" cried Worth. "Let your plank go, but hold tight to the line!"

Chase obeyed, and scrambling desperately, regardless of the pain the effort caused his injured leg, with the help of Worth and the rope he mounted into the tree.

He climbed drippingly upon one low limb, while Worth sat opposite on another, the flood rolling under them. And there, having gathered breath after the last violent struggle, the two enemies, once friends, looked at each other.

Missing Page



CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE APPLE-TREE.

“WORTH,” Chase gasped out, “you and that line saved me! I’m ever so much obliged.”

“You needn’t say that,” Worth replied, stern, but agitated. “I would have done the same for anybody.”

“I know you would!” exclaimed Chase, brokenly. “Because you



are the bravest and best fellow in the world — when you've a mind to be."

Worth scowled sullenly.

"I always did say that for you, and always will!" said Chase, weak and trembling.

"I'd have done it sooner for anybody else!" Worth added, grimly, after a pause. "I had a good mind to let you go."

"I couldn't have blamed you if you had," said Chase. "And maybe you'll be sorry you didn't."

All courage, all resentment, seemed to have gone out of him with his strength. He was hatless, his drenched hair still dripped with his clothing, he shook from head to foot with terror and cold.

In the silence that followed, broken by the rushing and gurgling flood, Worth fixed his dark, determined eyes upon him. He noticed that Chase braced himself with one foot against a crotch of the tree, while he seemed trying to find an easy position for the other.

Then a little drop of pity started from the sullen heart.

"Is your leg hurt?" Worth asked, but still in a cold, forbidding tone.

"Yes; it got jammed somehow when the ice and floodwood tumbled over on me. I was so near

being drowned and bruised to death generally, I didn't mind it till I tried to swim."

So saying, Chase suppressed a groan, and fixed his brow and lips with a resolute expression, while he tried once more to find ease for his leg.

There was another silence. Worth looked as if he meant to forget his enemy's presence; glancing down and around at the wild water.

A hencoop went by; then a drowned calf, still tied to a rail of its pen which had been carried away with it. Meanwhile the flood rose higher and higher in the orchard, reaching some of the lower limbs, and the trunks even of the trees that stood on more elevated ground.

It looked like an orchard growing out of a lake, or rather out of a vast onward-sweeping stream. The flood parted at the knoll on which the buildings stood, flowing around both ways; but it was fast rising over that.

Excited and anxious as he was, in view of all this, Worth could not keep his eyes from coming back to Chase, suffering with cold and the pain of his hurt.

He held his peace as long as he could, and was angry with himself when at last he couldn't help saying, —

"Change branches with me; you can sit easier here, and rest your leg."

Chase drew a quick, shivering breath.

"I'm very well here," he replied, after a pause. "I'm only too thankful to be out of that horrible water, in a dry apple-tree!"

"You are cold," Worth then said, seeing how he shook.

"I don't know but I am — now I think of it," replied the drenched and shuddering boy. "But I'm not half so cold as I was. I tell you, that ice-water made me ache to the very marrow of my bones. I remember it now; though I hardly thought of it at the time."

He was getting more and more possession of himself. Seeing Worth's troubled eyes studying him, he added, —

"I should have died of cold, sure, if you hadn't helped me out!"

The tones of his voice, tremulous and broken, and the look he gave his rescuer, were full of gratitude. That, and the consciousness of having done a humane action, softened Worth's heart more and more, in spite of himself.

He hesitated awhile, then said, with a sort of surly and unwilling benevolence, —

"You'll take cold; tie this over your head."

And pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket he tossed it to his enemy.

"I don't need it," said Chase. "But, if you say so—By George!" with a gush of feeling—"you're a trump, Worth!"

As he bound the handkerchief over his head, you could hardly have told whether the look with which Worth watched him was more of compassion or of anger.

Chase was still blue and shaking. After once more looking around on the flood, and trying to forget him, Worth said,—

"You'll surely get a chill. You'd better put on my coat."

"Oh no, I won't do that; you'll be cold yourself!" Chase objected. "I'm really quite comfortable."

"I don't want you to die of a chill now I've been to the trouble of helping you out of the water," said Worth, with grim humor. "Nobody knows how long we may have to stay in this tree. Here, you *must* take it!"

And having actually pulled off his coat, he swung it over to Chase.

"After all I've done to *you!*" said the wretched, penitent Chase.

"You've beat me every time," Worth muttered.
"But never mind. Take it!"

And he swung the coat again.

"Well, if you say so, — for a few minutes, — if I must!" Chase faltered, this time catching the garment. "But it's too bad!" seeing that Worth remained in his shirt-sleeves.

"I shan't miss it; I've got on warm underclothes," said Worth. "Pull off your wet one."

"I'll keep that on," said Chase. "And I'm not going to wet the inside of yours for you."

So saying, he threw Worth's coat over his shoulders inside out, and held it by the sleeves.

"I should think you might do as I say," said Worth, dissatisfied.

But Chase remained obstinate. It was hard enough for him to accept even thus much from his foe.

After another silence, he said, —

"You say I've beaten you. Maybe I have two or three times. But you've beaten me once for all."

"When, I'd like to know?" said Worth, with sudden, dark recollections.

"To-day — now," answered Chase. Worth was visibly moved.

If you would have your heart soften towards one

who has injured you, do him a service. Worth had not designed any such result; and when it came, enforced by Chase's reply, it surprised him almost to tears.

"Do you remember this tree?" he abruptly asked.

"It's the russet-tree, where we picked apples that Saturday afternoon," said Chase.

Then both were silent again, each occupied with his own thoughts.

Meanwhile, the broken clouds flamed up with a lovely sunset flush, the reflection of which changed all the overflowing valley to a crimson sea. And there the two boys still sat, perched above it, each on his apple-tree limb.

"Your bridge is gone," said Worth.

"Yes, and I-went with it," said Chase. "I stuck to a log at first, but it rolled over with me, so I was glad to swap it for a plank. What were you doing here?"

"Getting flood-wood," said Worth. "But the flood took back all I had got, and came pretty nigh taking me." He was beginning to appear more like the Worth of old times.

Just then his father called from the house.

"Here I am! safe in a tree!" Worth shouted back.

"We've no boat this year," he said to Chase; "and he can't help us. Besides, he has his hands full taking care of things, I guess!"

Chase now gave back the coat, declaring that he was quite warm without it.

"Well, you haven't let it do you much good," said Worth. He took it reluctantly, but hung it over the limb. It was some time before he would consent to put it on.

"I can't see pa anywhere," said Chase, after looking anxiously up the valley. "He's away, and don't know anything of what has happened to me."

Then he remembered with a wretched sinking of the heart that his father had gone to see about that unhappy "dead-dog law-suit."

"Worth!" he said, after another pause of a minute or two, "what a good time we had picking apples in this tree! Do you remember?"

"There are things that can't be forgotten!" Worth replied, with darkly working features.

"I wish some things could be!" exclaimed Chase. "Why couldn't we always have been friends—as we were on that day?"

Worth's resentful mood was returning. He flashed an angry look on Chase, and muttered,—

"It's fine for *you* to ask that question!"

"You may hate me!" said Chase. "But — to think of your doing me this good turn — after all that has happened! I can't get over it!"

Worth was silent a moment, his lip and eye quivering. Then his fury broke forth.

"There are things I can never forget, and things I can never forgive. I have been treated by you and your father as I didn't believe it possible for human beings to treat another."

"O Worth!" said Chase, pleadingly. "You know how we were driven to it."

"The way I was arrested, and taken before a justice, and charged with stealing, with *you* for a witness against me, in a room full of staring spectators! — I can never get over it, never, never!" exclaimed Worth, with tears of rage at these recollections.

"I am sorry," was all poor Chase could say. "I am very sorry."

There was silence again. Worth was actually weeping.

Chase felt that he had a great deal to say to justify himself for his conduct, and to justify his father, too. But he could not speak it without throwing heavy blame upon Worth; and it was no time for that. So he held his peace.

"I remember what you said to me that Saturday, in this very tree!" Worth broke forth again, but now with less anger than grief. "You could never bear to be separated from me; and if I went away from home, you would go too. You were picking apples from the end of that very limb over your head."

"I remember it," said Chase.

"And now see what you have done! See how we are separated!" said Worth, in passionate anguish of soul. "We are in the same tree again, but thousands of miles apart. If we had remained friends, and I had gone away, and the whole round world had been between us, we should still have been nearer together than we are now, or can ever be again."

The emotion of his deep and intense nature made him eloquent. In reply to this outburst, Chase could only say, —

"How could it ever have happened? I don't know!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

LOWMY PAVODE'S BOAT.

THE water had now nearly ceased to rise, and the turbulence of its first onset had subsided. Having filled the valley, it lay in a tranquil, shining sheet; with still a powerful current, however, along the old channel.

The sunset glow faded from the sky and from the flood. The gloom of approaching night was settling down. The wind had died away. There was a chill in the air. The prospect to poor, shivering Chase, at least, was dismal enough.

After a while Worth got the better of his excited feelings, and said, calmly, —

“It won't take many hours for the water to go down. But in the mean time I don't like the idea of spending the night in this tree.”

“I could get to your house if it wasn't for my leg,” said Chase. “And you can if you don't mind getting wet. That's something I can't recommend!”

“But I'm not going to leave you,” said Worth.

"I don't care for myself. But you'll get your death from your drenching if you stay here much longer."

That sounded like the Worth of old times once more. Chase was afraid to answer, lest he should stir up again recollections of their hideous feud.

They had had glimpses of the Lanktons gathering up objects adrift about the yard, and saving scared pullets from drowning. Now everything was quiet. The house had escaped, but Worth was sure the water must have reached the barn and stable.

Mr. Lankton at length appeared at the fence on the upper side of the orchard, and standing knee-deep in water, called out to know how Worth was getting along.

"Comfortably; though I don't fancy roosting here all night," Worth replied, saying nothing of Chase, whom his father had not discovered.

"I'll see to that," Mr. Lankton shouted again. "I'll make some sort of a raft, and bring you off, if you can wait."

"Hurry up!" said Worth.

"What will he think when he sees me?" said Chase.

"He'll think as I do, that the sooner you get into dry clothes, the better."

Then, suddenly, Worth added, —

"There's a boat down yonder! It is coming this way."

"Three persons in it," said Chase. "One rowing, and one pushing with a pole."

"Let's fly a signal!" cried Worth.

He felt in his pocket for his handkerchief, when he remembered that it was on Chase's head.

Chase pulled it off, and fluttered it from the limb.

"It will be a good while before they see that," said Worth. "They are keeping in shallow water over the fields. I'll yell at them."

And he yelled accordingly.

"They hear! they see us!" Chase exclaimed. "It's Lem Pavode in the bow. He swings his hat."

"It's Lowmy Pavode himself rowing," said Worth. "The stone-walls will be in their way," — as the boat, still keeping well off on the farther side of the river, approached the lane that led from the main road to Mr. Lankton's house.

But the walls were low. They were *Lankton* walls, with frequent gaps where the stones had tumbled out.

Towards one of the gaps, where the water flowed over, the boat directed its course, and passed it without difficulty. Then, turning down the lane, it found an opening in the other wall between the

bordering elm-trees standing in the flood, and floated through.

"The man poling," said Chase, "is that wretch Jim Lathbrook. I thought I knew his slouch."

The boat kept well up on the other side of the river until nearly opposite the boys in the tree, then struck diagonally across the current.

It was an old flat-bottomed skiff with three or four inches of water in the bottom. Worth hailed it with a glad hurrah.

"I thought your folks might need a helpin' hand," said Mr. Pavode, after Lem had got hold of the line Worth threw to him. "Hearing you yell, we come to you fust. That ain't Tim with ye?"

He had not recognized Worth's companion, bare-headed, in his wet hair.

"It's Chase! Chase Atway!" cried Lem, hauling in the line, and bringing the boat to the tree.

Jim had dropped his pole and laid hold of the line to help. But he now paused to give a prodigious twitch of his eye and cheek.

"If it don't beat all creation!" he said. "Damon and Pythias up a tree!"

"Come aboard," said Mr. Pavode. "You won't mind the leaky boat," he added, as Worth stepped down into it. "There's more water outside than in."

"Come, Chase!" said Worth, reaching to help him down without injury to his disabled leg. "We're all right now."



"The old boat has been drying up in the barn, all winter," said Lem; "and we came off without anything to bale with."

"I'm only too glad to get into anything that will

float," said Chase, seating himself at the bow. "I never expected to again, one while."

"You look as though you'd been in the water," said Jim.

"Well, I have!" said Chase. "I was on our bridge when it went. Can you take me home, Mr. Pavode?"

"No, he can't," said Worth. "You're going to our house for dry clothes first. Give me an oar. Let go the line, now, Lem!"

It was odd to see the boat navigating among the orchard trees. But Chase had something else to think of as they approached the house where he had many a time been welcomed as a friend, but which he had so lately looked upon with dread and hate.

He told in a few words of his peril and of his rescue, as the boat floated along by the side of the orchard, and around into the door-yard.

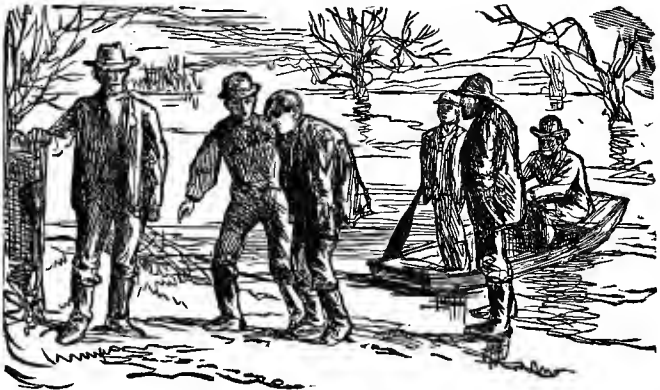
Worth meanwhile assisted Mr. Pavode at the oars. Lem bailed with his hat. Jim Lathbrook stood in the stern and pushed with the pole, chuckling every now and then, and at the close of the boy's story, repeating, with a wink and a twitch, —

"Beats all creation! I never see anything like it. Damon and Pythias up a tree!"

Then Mr. Lankton came out in the door-yard to

meet them, standing in the edge of the water, and glowered with astonishment upon the guest Worth was bringing home. The flood permitted the boat to land almost at the front door.

"I'm much obliged to you, Pavode," said Mr. Lankton. "I was just rigging up a raft. What's happened to *him*?" And he glowered again at Chase.



"He's been drowned, and he's got a broken ankle," said Mr. Pavode; "an' if you can't afford to take him in an' give him some hot whiskey an' dry clo'es, say so! an' he goes as straight to my house as this leaky ol' tub can carry him."

"I helped him out of the water, and I'm going to take care of him," said Worth, stepping out of the boat. "Lean on me, Chase."

"I wouldn't refuse shelter to our worst enemies as he and his father have been," said Mr. Lankton, sternly.

"I'd rather go home, if I could," said Chase. "But I'm much obliged to you all. I wish, Lem, if you can get across the water, you would hurry and tell my folks that I'm safe."

"He shall do that," said Lem's father. "And we'd carry you there, if it wouldn't take so long, workin' agin the stream, an' if you wasn't so cold an' wet."

"You're so kind!" said Chase, hobbling out of the boat; "all of you!" And he entered the house, with Worth's help.

"Them 's the two boys I had my eye on when I offered the prize to the school," said Mr. Pavode, standing in the boat, which he kept in place with an oar. "Bright fellers, both on 'em; an' great friends they was then, till the consarned pocket-rifle played the mischief atween 'em."

"I wish the pocket-rifle had been in Jericho before ever they saw it!" said Mr. Lankton.

"Wal, it seems to be in Jericho now, or some other safe place," remarked Jim Lathbrook. "Mabbe Damon and Pythias'll make up, now they hain't got that to quarrel about."

"But they accuse my boy of stealing it," said Mr. Lankton. "There's no making up after that."

"'Tis ruther rough on your boy," chuckled Jim, with his most expressive wink and twitch. "Now what, Pavode?"

"We'll set Lem acrost the flood, fust thing," Pavode replied; "then we'll come back, Lankton, if there's any thing we can do for you."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER THE RESCUE.

MR. ATWAY had, in the mean time, reached home, in anxious haste, to find that his bridge was gone, and that Chase had not arrived.

"There's only one thing to be done," he said to his wife. "I'll launch the boat, and row across the intervale, and bring him home — if he's in the sugar-bush — and Tomkins with him."

The boat was covered with boards beside the barn, where it had been hauled up for the winter. Mr. Atway, having found thole-pins and oars, was dragging it down to the water, which had risen to the head of the lane, when Lem Pavode ran into the yard, and told him in a few breathless words what had happened to Chase.

It was fortunate that the father had known nothing of the catastrophe until, with the news of it, came also the news of his son's rescue and safety. His alarm was great enough, as it was.

"At Lankton's! my boy at Lankton's!" he ex-

claimed. "That's the last place! — But it's better than the bottom of the river — thank heaven!"

With Lem's help, he launched the boat, and pulled away across the field into the swiftest part of the current; then rowed rapidly down, passing Lankton's orchard, and the russet-tree, which Lem pointed out.

Rowing out of the current again, below the orchard, he landed at Lankton's front door, and tied the boat to the scraper. But instead of entering there, he went round to the kitchen-door, with which near neighbors were more familiar.

As he approached, in the deepening twilight, he remembered his last visit — the dog lying dead by the door-step, sprinkled with radiance from the old tin lantern, his gloomy reception, and the quarrel and threats that followed. How little then did he dream that he would be coming again so soon, on such an errand!

"Go right in!" cried Tim, from the open woodshed, where he stood watching the flood. "Father's in the boat with Mr. Pavode, picking up things. Come here, Lem!"

Mr. Atway was not sorry that his enemy was absent. Getting no answer to his knock, he lifted the latch and entered the dim kitchen. There were

chairs by the stove, and wet clothes hanging over them to dry. A door was ajar, leading into the sitting-room beyond; and that opened into a bedroom, in which, as he passed on towards it, he heard the sound of voices.

He paused at the bed-room door, and, his eyes growing accustomed to the gloom, made out two or three figures.

Mrs. Lankton stood beside the bed, with an empty cup in her hand. Worth was arranging the clothes about the pillow. Closely wrapped in the clothes, with his head on the pillow, was Chase, who had evidently just risen to take the contents of the cup.

"O pa!" he said, being the first to perceive the figure in the dim door-way. "Come here!"

Mrs. Lankton stepped aside, to make room for him; and Mr. Atway advanced quickly to the bed, exclaiming, —

"My boy! how are you?"

"I'm all right!" Chase answered, cheerily. "Worth fished me out of the water, and now they've got me into warm blankets, with two or three cups of something hot inside of me, and a liniment with bandages on my ankle, and I'm as comfortable as can be!"

"Mrs. Lankton," said Mr. Atway, troubled and awkward, "I never can thank you and your son! I'm sorry Chase has caused you any trouble — I've come with a boat — are you able go home? You must have a doctor to your foot. Is it much hurt?"

Before Chase could answer these questions, Mrs. Lankton spoke for him; Worth, meanwhile, walking off into the next room.

"I don't think any bones are broken; but I beg of you not to think of moving him now. He is just getting into a sweat, and a chill might be very dangerous. If you think the doctor is necessary, you can bring him here."

So saying, Mrs. Lankton followed Worth.

"I don't know what to do; I don't know what to say!" Mr. Atway murmured, in the most painful anxiety and embarrassment.

"Don't say anything; don't do anything," replied Chase. "Any way, don't think of moving me just yet. They've saved my life, and I'm sure the best way to thank them will be to let them keep me here to-night."

"I don't know but you're right," said his father. "It's a terrible thing! How did it happen?"

In simple and few words Chase related his adventures.

Mr. Atway was a strong man, but he was affected to tears upon hearing how nearly his dear boy had escaped death, and how he had been saved.

Mrs. Lankton presently reappeared, pale and meekly patient, bringing in a lighted lamp, which she placed upon the table.

"If you say so," said Mr. Atway, "I will leave him here a while — till he gets quite over his chill — and bring the doctor — though I regret so much to trouble you."

"Don't speak of trouble!" she replied, tremulously. "Neither Worth nor I would be willing to have him moved to-night."

There was a painful pause; then she added, with tears breaking into her voice, —

"I always liked Chase! It seems now as if one of my own boys had been away, and come back to me."

"I'm as sorry as anybody that there has ever been any difficulty," Mr. Atway replied. "And I think, now, if your husband only thought and felt as you do, it might all be settled. I'll leave Chase, if you say so."

"Tell ma not to be worried about me," Chase said, as his father was taking leave. "I shan't be sick; and I don't believe my ankle needs the doctor — *she* has taken such good care of me!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"DAMON AND PYTHIAS."

FOR a while the boy was left entirely alone, with only the lamp and his own excited thoughts for company. Then Mrs. Lankton brought him some gruel. Then, while he was sitting up, eating it, Worth came in and sat by his bed.

They talked about the flood; then, after an embarrassing silence, Chase said, —

"It's you and I, Worth, who have got our fathers into a scrape, and I wish you and I might settle it."

"So we might," Worth replied, with a shade of the old resentment crossing his features, "if your father hadn't had me prosecuted."

Chase was trying to frame a friendly answer, excusing his father without offending Worth, when Worth broke out, —

"Do you really imagine I stole your pocket-rifle?"

"Why, of course," faltered Chase. "I had — no doubt but that you — took it. Didn't you?"

"No, sir!" Worth declared with strong feeling. "I never saw it after you went into the sugar-bush with it that day. And I never touched it. Do you think I stood up there in the court and perjured myself?"

"I never believed you would do that," said Chase. "But why wouldn't you explain, when Squire Holgate asked you what you followed me for?"

"Because I *was* after the pocket-rifle then; I was mad, and meant to get it and destroy it," Worth declared.

"That's just what I supposed you wanted to do, and what I supposed you did," said Chase.

"You were partly mistaken — just as you have been about other things," Worth replied. "My motive was bad enough; I could have broken the thing over your head!"

"Why didn't you?"

"I didn't know where to find it. I had no idea it was hung up there in the shanty. I thought you had it in your pocket; and of course I couldn't get it from you while Tomkins was about. So I finally gave it up and came home."

"Why didn't you say that to the judge?"

"Because, if I had confessed what I meant to do, it would have been evidence against myself. Who would have believed me after that?"

"I would! I believe you now!" exclaimed Chase, over his bowl of gruel. "We have quarrelled; we have both acted like fools! But I know you of old, Worth Lankton! and when you talk out as you do now, I know you are telling the truth."

Worth was touched by this generous tribute.

"Then maybe you will believe me when I say something else."

"What?" cried Chase.

"The thing that first turned you against me," said Worth. "For I believe you were really my friend up to that time."

"What time?"

"That Saturday night, when, as you accused me afterwards, I got into the school-house for my speller." Worth hesitated, and Chase exclaimed:

"That hurt me terribly, Worth! Nothing that ever happened, before or since, ever hurt me so much. To think that you — after I had proposed to go with you and you had refused to do what you called so mean a thing — that you should then go alone, and act as you did about it, you can't wonder that I felt so."

"No! But I didn't know that you knew, and I thought you were turning against me without any good cause. Now let me tell you!"

"Do!" Chase implored. "I can forgive anything now; but I want to know the truth."

He had quite forgotten to eat his gruel. He held



the bowl in his lap, sitting up there in bed, in the dim lamplight, and listened with absorbed interest to Worth's explanation.

"I'll tell you all about it," said Worth. "After I refused to go with you, I thought better of it; and went up by your house, hoping you would come out and suggest the thing again. But I was ashamed to propose it to you, after what I had said. As I didn't see you, I kept on towards the school-house; then it finally occurred to me that I would climb in and get both spellers, and give you yours as I went along back."

"Why didn't you?" said Chase, anxiously. "That would have saved all this!"

"Perhaps; and perhaps not," said Worth. "Anyway, I couldn't find your speller, and had to come away without it. And I'll tell you what I thought: I thought you had been there before me and taken it away. I couldn't blame you if you had, for you had proposed the thing to me frankly, and you had a right to go alone if I wouldn't go with you."

"But why — why didn't you tell me afterwards — that Monday morning?" Chase implored.

"I meant to. But I wanted to see if you had your book. And when I found you didn't have it, I was really ashamed to tell you what I had done. I didn't know how to explain it. We found your book on the floor, you remember."

"Yes," exclaimed Chase; "and I remember more

than you ever suspected! But why didn't you explain all this when we finally quarrelled, and I accused you, as you say?"

"I was so astonished when I found that you knew my secret, and what you said made me so mad, that I couldn't say a word till you had got out of the way. How did you ever find it out, Chase?"

"I was in the school-house, hidden behind the desks, when you got in," Chase confessed. "I had already taken my spelling-book, and that's the reason you couldn't find it."

"But why did you hide?" said Worth, astonished.

"Because I thought you had meant to deceive me; and I waited to see if you would really take away your speller, after what you had said. When I found that you *had* taken it," Chase continued, "I just flung mine at the corner there, where we found it the next Monday, and went home, thinking I would have nothing to do with that prize business."

"Then you really determined not to compete?" Worth eagerly inquired.

"Really!" answered Chase. "I was so hurt and so unhappy that I never wanted to see a spelling-book again."

"Why did you change about so, then?" Worth exclaimed.

"I was provoked at what I saw in you that Monday, — or thought I saw," Chase confessed. "and I made-up my mind to do all I could to keep you from getting the prize, and to help Lem get it. I never thought of winning it for myself until after Lem failed."

"I wish we had understood each other!" said Worth.

"It would have saved all this trouble between us," said Chase.

"It might; but, as I said before, it might not," replied Worth, humbly. "There's something in me, — I know it better than anybody, and I would give anything to get it out of me! A dreadful disposition! I can never bear to be beaten in anything."

"I have often regretted to see that feeling in you, Worth."

"It is a mean, miserable, selfish feeling, exclaimed Worth, bitterly. "I wonder that you bore with it as long as you did."

"That was because I saw what you were, in spite of it," said Chase, with his old fervor of friendship.

"Now that I know why you turned against me, I can't blame you for anything," Worth admitted, after a pause. "I don't blame you for shooting the

dog. No, nor for thinking I took the pocket-rifle. Though I half believed at one time it wasn't stolen at all."

"How so?" Chase asked.

"I thought it was all a put up job on the part of your folks," Worth replied, "to pay us off for the law-suit."

"O Worth, how could you think that?" said Chase. "What things we have been ready to believe of each other!" After a pause, he added: "But it *was* because your father had sued him that pa made the complaint, and had you taken up. How I wish he hadn't! It's all a miserable muss, any way."

Worth sat gloomily brooding over his trouble, when Chase broke out again, —

"It's a perfect mystery what *did* become of that pocket-rifle! I'd give anything to know!"

"So would I!" said Worth.

Mr. Atway now came in with the doctor.

The bruised leg was examined and dressed anew; and Chase was then left for the night. But in the morning, his father came again to take him away.

The boy was weak, but free from fever; and with no other bad effect of his accident than what remained in his swollen and painful limb.

Mr. Atway carried him in his arms to the boat, and with Worth's help placed him, warmly wrapped, on cushions prepared for him. Then came the final leave-taking.

Worth was once more the Worth of other days. And Mrs. Lankton was kind to the last. But her husband had few and very curt words in response to Mr. Atway's grateful acknowledgments of what had been done for Chase; and he saw the boat depart with a stern, relentless frown.

The day was fine. The morning light shone brightly across the water, which still flooded the fields and the lower half of Mr. Lankton's orchard, and rippled like a lake in the freshly blowing breeze.

A pair of bluebirds were singing in the topmost boughs of the old russet-tree, as the boat passed under it. Where could they have come from so suddenly after the storm?

Chase, telling again his story, asked anxiously if the prosecution against Worth could not be stopped.

"I don't know," said his father, gravely. "If you really think he didn't take the rifle —"

"Oh, I'm sure of it!" Chase exclaimed.

"Well, I'll see what I can do; I'll consult Squire Holgate this very forenoon."

They crossed the river near the site of the old bridge, the absence of which gave them much to talk and think about. Then, landing in the lane, Mr. Atway once more lifted Chase in his arms and bore him to the house.

“O my boy!” said his mother, embracing him, and weeping over him. “It has been all I could do to keep from going to you!”

Leaving him in her loving hands, Mr. Atway set off early to see and consult Squire Holgate. When he came home again, in the course of an hour or two, he was looking very serious.

“How is it?” Chase asked, from the lounge, where he sat nursing his leg.

“I couldn’t get much satisfaction out of the squire,” replied his father. “Of course he had to remind me how hard he tried to have the matter settled. But now it has gone beyond his control, and it’s not very agreeable news we get from it.”

“Not more trouble, I hope,” said Chase.

“Nothing but what we’ve been expecting,” replied his father. “But it’s bad, as the thing has turned. The grand jury has found a bill of indictment against Worth for stealing the pocket-rifle.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

LAUNCHING THE BOULDER.

THE flood subsided rapidly. By noon the valley, which had been white when last seen, reappeared, swept of the last vestige of snow, and also of fences here and there, which had not, like those of the most careful farmers, been built to stay.

Even at high-water, the stakes and riders of Mr. Atway's fences could be seen bristling above the flood and marking the boundaries of his submerged fields. And there they remained after it went down. But of Mr. Lankton's part of the fence, which had given both families so much trouble, scarcely a length was left.

"I can't say I'm very sorry," Mr. Atway remarked, looking out on the valley from the window by Chase's lounge. "Now something will have to be done. And I'll tell you what, my boy! This is the second time I've lost a bridge there; the next one we'll build to stand."

"I was surprised that Mr. Lankton's didn't go too," said Chase.

"His is higher than ours was," replied his father; "and the flood, spreading out, had spent much of its force before it got there. I'm glad Lankton had one piece of luck."

Parents and son firmly believed that his preservation was due to Worth; and they were grateful accordingly. Chase begged his father to make peace with Mr. Lankton.

"I suppose there's only one way," Mr. Atway replied. "But I don't mind — I'll pay for their pesky pup, and settle it."

"I wish you would!" said Chase. "They'll need the money towards rebuilding their fences."

"That's a good idea," rejoined his father. "I'll hint it to Lankton."

As soon as Chase was able to ride out comfortably, his father, one afternoon, took him over to Mr. Lankton's to make a neighborly call, and once more acknowledge thankfully Worth's generous conduct and his mother's kindness.

Then Mr. Atway made a proffer of services, in repairing damages done by the flood, and remarked, —

"You've had bad luck with fences, Lankton; and I don't mind helping you replace the one between our fields — to the extent of twenty-five dollars, any

way, the value you put on your dog. "Yes," he added, after a moment's reflection, "and I'll pay costs, too, if that will be satisfactory."

"It will be satisfactory as far as it goes," said Lankton.

He continued sullen, in spite of neighborly advances; and would not be conciliated as long as the indictment hung over his son.

"You don't believe he took that pocket-rifle any more than I do!" he said, with rising wrath.

"I own, I now think as you do," replied Mr. Atway; "and I'll do what I can to have the indictment quashed. But when Squire Holgate asked me if any new facts had been developed since my sworn statement, I was obliged to answer no. He said a mere change of *opinion* on my part, since your folks had done us a favor, wouldn't have much influence with the district attorney. There's where it stands. I wish the plaguy thing could be found!"

"When my ankle gets well, I'm going to have another good hunt for it," said Chase.

"Let me go with you," said Worth.

"Oh! will you?" cried Chase, gladly.

The thing was thus agreed upon. The lame leg mended rapidly, and it was not many days before the two boys set off on their expedition.

It was a mild and pleasant forenoon. Robins and finches sang to them on fence and tree as they passed. On the edge of the woods they stopped to look back upon the intervale, already beginning to appear green in the warm spring sun.

It seemed like a dream to them, that all that bright valley had been deluged by rain and thaw only a little while before.

It seemed like a dream no less, that they two had ever quarrelled. Their old friendship, so lately lost, was now restored, all the richer, perhaps, for the flood of passion beneath which it had been hidden but not destroyed.

They came together now as never before. They understood each other better; each knew the other's weaknesses, and made allowance for them. Chase, especially, had taken to heart this lesson — that in the life we live there is no faultless hero or friend; and that if we wait for perfection, we shall never love.

They entered the spacious woods. Quails and squirrels started up before them, rustling the dead leaves; crows cawed musically afar off in the tall tops. The wild fragrance of woods in early spring filled the air. The forest was like a mighty harp to the sweeping wind.

In the glow of health and sympathy, the boys were happy. Full of hope, and eager in their quest, they talked and laughed gayly, and ran up to the old sugar-camp with glad shouts.

This had been deserted since the last interruption of the sugar-making ; and the shanty was filled with sap-buckets, which they tumbled out in their hurried but thorough search. Outside and in, even under the floor of rough boards, they looked, but in vain.

"There's certainly no pocket-rifle here," Worth at length admitted ; and reluctantly the sap-buckets were replaced.

They then wandered through the woods, until, coming to an opening, they looked up the mountain-side and saw the great boulder hanging on its crag.

Chase had taken a hatchet which had been left at the shanty, in order to carry it home. An idea now occurred to him.

"Let us go up there, Worth, cut some stout levers, and have the fun with the big rock we talked about last fall."

"Agreed," said Worth.

They passed along the upper side of the dense thicket in their ascent, and cut some strong hickory saplings for their purpose ; shoving them up over the edge of the cliff, and then clambering after them.

Once more the valley lay spread out before them, like a map, with its checkered farms and long, winding river. They sat down to rest a few minutes and enjoy the prospect.

"A good deal has happened since we had that talk with Jim Lathbrook up here," said Chase. "How often I have thought of it, and how ashamed it has made me! To think that what a worthless fellow like him said to us about friendship should ever have come true — with you and me, Worth!"

"It was humiliating," replied Worth. "But, after all, what people said was nothing to what I suffered from the quarrel. How I missed you, Chase!"

"Did you?" said Chase. "Well, it is all over now; and I should be perfectly happy if we could find that pocket-rifle. Not that I care for it. But on your account, Worth."

"I believe it has gone the way of a good many things that have disappeared mysteriously from our town the past year or two," said Worth. "But the trouble will be to prove it; or to prove that *I didn't* steal it."

"Don't let's worry; I'm sure you will come out all-right," said Chase.

"The wind is always cold up here!" suddenly

exclaimed Worth, starting to his feet. "Now let's see what we can do."

They rolled some big stones to the spot, to serve as fulcrums and props; all the while keeping up their friendly chat.

"I wish you knew what a picture you were, Chase, when you sat here by the rock that day and talked to Lathbrook, and told him the story of Damon and Pythias. You were fine! How often, when I was mad with you, I remembered how you looked then, and how proud and happy you made me!"

"I saw it in your eye at the time," said Chase. "I wasn't talking to Lathbrook; I was really talking to you. Now slip your handspike under!"

"I believe I move it!" cried Worth, swinging down on his lever.

"Of course you do! Now hold it till I get a bite. There! Clap a stone under."

"Every time I have looked up from the valley and seen this rock," said Worth, "I've thought of Lathbrook and his triumph over us; and I shall be glad to get it out of the way."

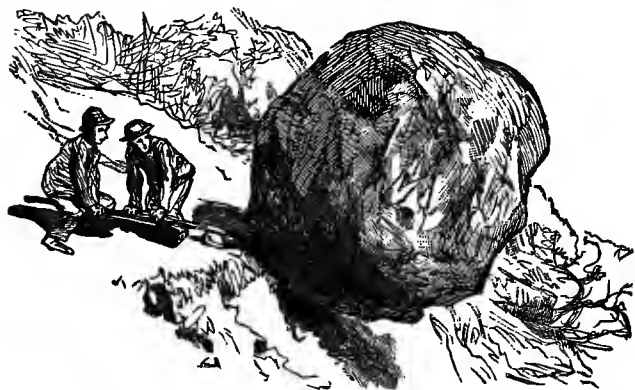
"I wish he was here to see us work together sending it down," said Chase.

"It moves easily now; we've got it almost on its centre of gravity. Won't it make a rumpus in the

thickets down there!" And he paused to give a glance over the brow of the cliff.

"She's all ready!" said Worth. "I believe another bite will send her over."

"Wait till I shove another stone under. Now rest on it," said Chase, "while we get everything ready."



I believe if 'twasn't for the forest trees, it would roll half-way to the river."

"Say the word," cried Worth, getting another hold with his lever.

"Now!" said Chase.

Down went the long end of the lever a foot or two. Up went the short end an inch. But that inch was enough.

The enormous rock poised an instant on its bal-

lancing point, then slowly, sleepily at first, began to settle over the other way.

"She's going!" cried Chase, in high excitement.

There was a moment's hesitation on the part of the mighty boulder; having rested for unknown centuries on that world-surveying crest of the mountain, it seemed reluctant to make up its mind to move.

But suddenly the mossy cushion and accumulated soil under its lower edge gave way; the granite foot crushed to the ledge; and the tremendous body of stone, revolving, gave a sluggish, clumsy, wallowing plunge over the cliff.

A plunge, a leap, a crashing bound into the thicket, like some huge creature dashing at its prey; swift and swifter, the stout saplings breaking before it like straw; rushing and tearing down a broad straight furrow to the woods, with tremendous turmoil of flying earth and boughs!

Even the larger trees did not stop it. Stems a foot thick split and splintered before it, and lofty tops went crackling and crashing down.

The boys looked at each other in sudden terror at what they had done. What if the stupendous missile should cut its way clear through the forest, and land like an aërolite from heaven in the meadow below.

But even while their nerves were thrilling with this conjecture, huge trunks and projecting ledges brought the monster to terms in a hollow of the mountain-side. And suddenly all was still. Only a woman screamed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RUINED HUT.

SUCH a wild, shrill shriek it was! It came from the woods below, through which the stone had mown its frightful swath.

No sooner were the boys relieved from their first apprehension than a fresh fear filled them.

"There's somebody hurt!" said Chase.

"What have we done?" exclaimed Worth.

Then one impulse seized them both, to follow the boulder and find what fatal mischief it had wrought.

Down the face of the cliff they went, in the path already made for them, holding on by saplings, dropping from ledge to ledge, and picking their way over rocks and splintered stems; a terrible descent!

The cries had ceased; but the track of the boulder guided them to the spot whence they had arisen; and there an amazing sight met their eyes.

In the midst of the dense thickets was a bare, rugged, rocky shelf, about which grew a few trunks

of considerable size. The boulder had swept down two or three of these; and one of them in falling, with its outspread limbs, had crushed a cabin almost as your fingers would with a blow crush an egg-shell.

The ruin lay a mere flattened mass of broken boards, held down by the shattered branches, which the woman was wildly endeavoring to tear away.

"What's the matter? Who's hurt?" cried both boys, as with one breath, springing to the lichen-covered ledge.

"My husband! O Lord! O Lord! he is killed!" said the woman, falling back from her vain efforts, and despairingly throwing up her hands.

"Jim Lathbrook!" exclaimed Chase—for the woman was Sal. "What is this? how came you here?"

"Help me git him out!" said the terrified wife. "It's a judgment from heaven! O Lord! O Lord!"

"We can do nothing without the hatchet," said Worth. They had left that, in their haste, on the top of the cliff. "I'll go for it." And he recommenced the toilsome ascent.

Crushed as the hut was, the boards of the roof, composed of two or three thicknesses, were so held together by nails, and so pressed down by the

weight of the tree, that Chase, even with Worth's help, had been unable to move them; so now, while waiting, he turned to question the woman.

"He was asleep," she said. "But I heard the noise jest in time, and run out."

"I thought you lived up over the mountain," said Chase.

"We do, but in an evil hour we built this cabin here. It's a judgment upon us for our sins! O Lord!" and the wretched Sal wrung her hands.

"How *could* you build it here? Where did you get the material?"

"We brought the boards from your old sugar-house."

"But that was burnt!"

"It was burnt after we had took what we wanted from it. Then Jim set the rest afire to hide what we had done. Jim and me brought the stuff up through the woods to build this hiding-place to keep our things in. O Lord! O Lord!"

Chase was beginning to recover from his fright and bewilderment enough to understand.

"Oh yes, your *things!*" he said, keenly eyeing the poor woman. "I see!"

"If it was anything to eat, we could keep it here till we wanted it," she went on, as if the only relief

to her terror was in swift confession. "If it was something to raise money on, we would hide it till the excitement blowed over, and we could take it away. But the Lord has found us out! O Lord! O Lord!"

"I hope Jim isn't dead!" said Chase.

"I know he is!" replied Sal. "He'd be makin' some sort of a noise if he wasn't. I allers told him 'twould end somehow so. But both on us hated work. All we ever done any work for was jest to git into houses and see what there was to take."

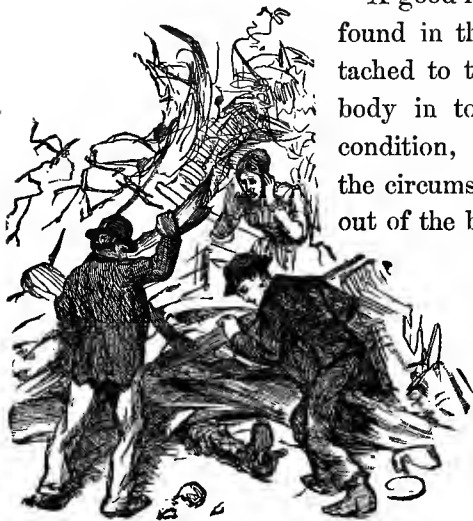
"It's a wonder you could carry on your trade so long without being suspected?" said Chase.

"That's 'cause we was careful not to keep anything to home; though we *have* been 'spected; and our house has been watched. But we was too sly for anybody! It took the Lord Himself to ketch us! And He *has* ketched us! O Lord!"

Worth coming with the hatchet, both boys set to work to cut and tear away the branches that held the ruin down, then to separate and remove the boards.

The woman watched them gratefully, helping a little now and then, but oftener standing by wringing her hands, and uttering her one ejaculation of repentance and superstitious fear.

At length a boot came to light through an opening the boys made in the wreck. "That's him! That's Jim's leg!" shrieked Sal. "Is he dead?"



A good leg was in fact found in the boot. Attached to the leg was a body in tolerably good condition, considering the circumstances. And out of the body, when it was fairly relieved of its load, issued a good lusty groan.

"Jim! O Jim! be ye alive?" said

Sal, stooping to him under the overhanging trees. "Say you're alive!"

"Guess so! Blessed if I know much about it!" said Jim.

The last of the rubbish being removed, he sat up, with Sal's assistance, looked at her, then at the boys, and put this comprehensive question:

"What's all the row?"

The boys, who had greatly feared to find him dead or fatally injured, shared her joy at seeing him come out of his swoon with no worse damage, apparently, than a broken shoulder and a bruised head.

Blood was streaming down one side of his face ; and it was interesting to see that the other side was still able to give its vivacious wink and twitch.

"I didn't quite know ye at fust. But I guess I know ye now !"

"Yes, you ought to, Jim," said Chase. "It's Damon and Pythias !"

"Damon and Pythias !" he repeated, with another twitch, accompanied by a ghastly grin. "What in thunder do you want here? What's been and gone and done this?"

"The boulder has been tumbling down on you a little," said Chase. "That's all !"

"I should think it was enough !" groaned Jim, and swooned again.

They drew him out of the ruin, and laid him on the ledge, with his head and injured shoulder in the lap of the faithful Sal.

When he once more came to himself, he saw the boys uncovering from the wreck an astonishing miscellany of articles plundered from the town.

An axe, which Chase recognized as his father's.

A firkin-cover, bearing the name of "*L. Pavode*," the firkin itself, half-full of butter (afterwards



proved to be of Mrs. Pavode's making) in pretty good condition.

A cheese, badly smashed.

An auger, to which Worth confidently laid claim. It had been missing from his father's barn for a

year. Together with a great variety of objects, useful and otherwise ; among which was one which made Chase scream for joy.

It was the pocket-rifle !

“ It’s broken,” he said, pulling it out from the heap, and holding it up. “ But no matter. The mystery is solved. Hurrah ! ”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW IT ALL ENDED.

“YOU’VE ruther got ahead of me here, boys!” said Jim, with a rueful twitch of his eye and cheek. “Take everything! but give me time to mend my broken bones, and git away, and your town will never see hide or hair of me agin.”

“We’ll see about that!” cried Chase.

And leaving Worth to keep guard over the plunder and the plunderers, he followed the boulder’s furrow down into the woods, and hurried thence across the valley.

Mr. Lankton, Mr. Atway, Mr. Pavode, and two or three other neighbors, with Lem and Tim, and a lively following of boys, accompanied him to the scene of the catastrophe.

Jim was sitting up, but still unable to walk; so that he enjoyed a ride on a litter constructed of poles and boughs, and carried by the men on their return.

His hut had been demolished and his private store

was taken away, to be restored to numerous claimants. But he now had a surgeon for his wounds at the public expense, and food and lodging in the county jail.

The excitement of the adventure, together with the discovery of several articles belonging to him beside the auger, — and especially the finding of the pocket-rifle, — put Mr. Lankton into unusually good spirits, and led to a complete reconciliation between him and his neighbor.

Both the lawsuit and the case against Worth were dropped. The farmers and their boys "changed works" while rebuilding Atway's bridge, and placing a good strong post-and-wire fence between the two farms.

The pocket-rifle was never mended, but hung up by Chase as a memento. And the two friends were happy.

Sal was let go; but Jim, after his recovery, was put on trial for larceny, and convicted. His left eye and cheek twitched prodigiously when he saw that the principal witnesses against him were Damon and Pythias. He did not laugh at them any more now.

The boulder still lies in its new bed among the woods and ledges where it fell. I have passed

around it and retraced its wonderful course up the mountain-side more than once in my summer tramps among those hills.

The two friends still remain neighbors on their adjoining farms. Mr. Atway, in his advancing years, has given up the management of affairs mostly to Chàse. Mr. Lankton is dead, and the shiftless old farm has become neat and thrifty in Worth's hands.

THE END.

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"Mr. TROWBRIDGE is one of the most satisfactory of the writers of juveniles. His stories are healthful, natural, and interesting. From the appearance of the Brighthope series until the present, he has brought out a series of books, mostly for boys, which do not contain a single objectionable word or line. THE POCKET RIFLE is no exception to the general run of TROWBRIDGE'S stories. It is a simple story, showing that rivalry will destroy the strongest friendships." — *Chicago Alliance*.

"Mr. J. T. TROWBRIDGE renews his acquaintance this year with his world of admiring young readers by the POCKET RIFLE, a boy's story which will be read with avidity, as it ought to be, it is so brightly and frankly written, and with such evident knowledge of the temperaments and habits, the friendships and enmities of schoolboys. It is a little novel, with two heroes, who are skilfully drawn against a background of New England country landscape. The POCKET RIFLE is just the book, metaphorically speaking, to teach the young idea how to shoot." — *New York Mail*.

"This is a capital story for boys. TROWBRIDGE never tells a story poorly. This teaches honesty, integrity, and friendship, and how best they can be promoted. It shows the danger of hasty judgment and circumstantial evidence; that right-doing pays, and dishonesty never." — *Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

"The title of this story for boys suggests warfare and bloodshed, and possibly romantic adventures among pirates or Indians. The book itself does not, however, confirm in the least that antecedent suspicion. It is a description of school-days. The pocket rifle shoots nobody. It serves as a prize which a foolish teacher offered for the best spelling. As a prize, rather than as a rifle, it becomes the occasion of jealousy and trouble, which culminated in a trial of the unsuccessful contestant under the charge of stealing. He was, nevertheless, innocent, which is at last made evident to the world, as it was all along to the reader." — *Churchman*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

THE JOLLY ROVER.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.

"THE JOLLY ROVER ought to be welcomed with delight by parents and young people as well, for, however interesting this popular author may seek to make himself, he never loses sight of the idea that fiction is never wholesome except when it tends to elevate the mind and to purify the sentiments of youth. As a story-teller he stands foremost among American writers for the young. His motives and teachings are always on the side of morality, but his heroes are never goody-goody or prodigies in their way. In this book he aims to portray the false ideas and misconduct that are promoted in youth by the reading of the pernicious literature of our time. His hero is a boy, well-born and carefully reared, who has a notion that he must see the world and do something heroic; indeed he aims to become a sort of 'Dime Novel' hero, and with this intention runs away from home. His adventures away from home are wonderfully varied and exciting, full of intense interest, and just thrilling enough to whet the reader's curiosity. The lesson is wholesome, for no one would care to follow THE JOLLY ROVER'S example. There is not a dull page in the volume. A number of illustrations lend attraction to the story. The 'nub' of the story is contained in the following extract:—

"'I am afraid,' said Mr. Wing, 'that we—that I—have been to blame for the kind of reading he [the son] has had so much of. I had a feeling that it wasn't healthy for him; yet I never took the trouble to examine it carefully, or to provide something better in its place.'"— *Our Home*.

"The hero of this highly interesting book is a wide-awake, inquisitive and knowing fellow, who, through the teachings of dime novels,—in which the tomahawk and black flag are conspicuous symbols,—is fired with a desire to exterminate the red men of the West, and so runs away from home. That he finds plenty of adventure, without the happiness he so much anticipated, anyone who follows him through thirty-eight chapters of the most interesting reading ever placed in the hands of young people, will be convinced."— *Gospel Banner*.

"Fathers cannot always prevent the reading of poor newspapers by their growing boys; but they are bound to try, if they are worthy a father's name. This book will help them amazingly to neutralize the ill effects of any poison their children may have already swallowed, in the way of sham-adventurous stories and wildly fictitious tales. The JOLLY ROVER runs from home and meets life as it is, till he is glad enough to seek again his father's house. Mr. TROWBRIDGE has the power of making an instructive story absorbing in its interest, and of covering a moral so that it is easy to take."— *Christian Intelligencer*.

THE LITTLE MASTER.

Cloth. 230 pages. \$1.25.

"Mr. TROWBRIDGE's stories are perhaps most popular with young people, but older people, and teachers especially, will be interested in this little book. It will recall to many the early days of their experience as a teacher; and the hero, Chauncey Mayhew, will be sure to obtain their sympathy, as much as his trials and victories will excite their interest. The story begins with a disappointment for the young teacher. This is nothing new in the experience of a teacher; in fact, it belongs to the natural order of events, for a teacher, no matter how successful, must certainly start out with disappointments. In the present case, Chauncey Mayhew's disappointment is speedily followed by encouragement. He has the fortune to make an impression upon the son (and a very self-willed son, too) of the chairman of the school committee. The chairman is virtually the whole committee, and through the influence of the son, Chauncey receives the appointment to 'keep school' in the Mount Dustan district. His experiences in this district, with both the scholars and the committee, form the 'meat' of twenty-five chapters of the book. He resigned: why, is told in the last chapter. There are several illustrations scattered throughout the book, which picture the most telling incidents in the story. It is needless to say the story is well told; that is presumed as a matter of course, for all of Mr. TROWBRIDGE's stories have been well told. This story has appeared in one of the Boston periodicals, and had a large circulation; which fact, outside of its author's name, will tend to make it popular."—*School Journal*.

"The more stories Mr. TROWBRIDGE can write, the better for the boys of this generation. Flooded as our country is with literature of a dime-novel order, we have need of just such safe and interesting books as *THE LITTLE MASTER*, 'Phil and His Friends,' 'Bound in Honor,' etc., to put into the hands of our growing boys."—*Living Church*.

"No more need be said than that Mr. TROWBRIDGE has written a book for the boys, that has all the art and fascination of his other boys' books, with as much genuine philosophy of life. This author's success lies largely in his power to write with a purpose, but without the objectionable moral. The success of the little schoolmaster has many a good point by which boys will profit, while they read with interest. Many a teacher could profit by reading of this plucky little schoolmaster."—*Journal of Education*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.

“No better or more pleasing writer for young folks than Mr. TROWBRIDGE can be found. He draws his characters true to life, concealing no faults, and exaggerating no virtues, but paints each in their own lights and shadows so vividly that to avoid the one and imitate the other must be the natural impulse of all boys and girls who read his most excellent and fascinating stories. PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS is particularly good. It is spirited and full of lively incidents, the interest never flagging, but rather increasing from the first. The hero is the unfortunate son of a man, who, like many other persons, drank, and had the faculty of getting in debt, without the honor or manliness to get out, as he ran away and left it when the crisis came. The shame and humiliation of such a course of life, together with constant trouble it imposed, killed Phil's mother, whose noble nature he fully inherited. The opening of the story finds father and son at a country hotel, owned by one Solomon Bass, to whom he is indebted for board, horses, drink, etc., \$100, besides owing smaller sums to other business men of the town. One day an altercation occurred between Mr. Farlow, the debtor, and Sol Bass, about the payment of the bill, which ended in Bass receiving a written agreement that he should keep his son Phil until he should be able to send the \$100. Before poor Phil awoke next morning his father had decamped, leaving him as hostage to work out the debt. He very naturally resented such outrageous treatment, and left the hated place, hoping to find a home for himself where he could work and be respected; but Sallie Bass, the village holden, goes in pursuit, finds him in the woods and persuades him to return, which he does reluctantly, and stays a year, more than cancelling his father's debt. Bass, however, still claims him and refuses any pay for further services, so Phil leaves for good, and finds a friend and defender in the village doctor, and through him many others. Sallie Bass is quite a figure in the story, her freaks and pranks forming an indispensable feature of the book. The above are only a few incidents of the story, but space forbids further notice.” — *San José Mercury*.

HIS OWN MASTER.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.

"We class this as one of the very best stories for boys that we ever read. The tone is perfectly healthy, and the interest is kept up to the end. Jacob Fortune was left without any protector, by the death of his aunt, when fifteen years of age — his father and mother having long been dead. While standing by the old home brooding over his loneliness, he is accosted by an airy young man of whom he had taken some dancing lessons the year previous; and this self-styled Professor Alphonse Pinkney draws from the boy the story of his forlorn condition, and the fact that he has in Cincinnati an uncle that he designs to seek out. The dashing Alphonse, himself only twenty years old, at once induces him to sell off the little stock left him, and start with him to find his uncle. They start down the Ohio on a steamer, the little Jeremy Diddler of a dancing master taking care of the money. He soon deserts Jacob under very aggravating circumstances, leaving the poor boy penniless, and his further adventures are graphically related. He is a truthful, noble little fellow, and his good face makes him friends in times of dire need." — *Boston Home Journal*.

"This is a book after the typical boy's own heart. Its hero is a plucky young fellow, who, seeing no chance for himself at home, determines to make his own way in the world as best he can without being beholden to anyone. He sets out accordingly, trudges to the Far West, and finds the road to fortune an unpleasantly rough one. The story of his strange and manifold adventures will be found by every juvenile vastly entertaining. It is full of fun and sensation, while the atmosphere of the book is so perfectly healthy that parents can put HIS OWN MASTER into their children's hands with the utmost confidence. Mr. TROWBRIDGE has the happy faculty of being amusing and moral at the same time." — *Phila. Inquirer*.

"From its opening chapter, the story is light, racy, and humorous, and during the hero's travels the author contrives to introduce to his readers descriptions of steamboat life, life on the road as a tramp, and character sketches thoroughly American, and invariably drawn true to nature. The book is healthy in its tone, does not contain a line of effeminate sentimentality, and teaches the youth of our country that self-control and honest industrious effort, no matter how humble or slow, always forms the surest road whereby happiness is obtained. The book is a good one for any season." — *Independent, Mount Vernon*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

HIS ONE FAULT.

Cloth. 275 pages. \$1.25.

"The attractive qualities which have given Mr. TROWBRIDGE such a high rank as a story-teller are well exhibited in this his latest novel. It is a tale of New-England life on the farm, which the author knows so well how to portray. The plot of the story, if it can be said to have one, we shall leave our young readers to learn from the book. They will find out from it how Kit came to steal a horse when he thought he was reclaiming one, how he got knocked senseless as a fruit-thief when he was trying to save grapes from being stolen, and other adventures which happened to him on account of his 'one fault.'" — *Burlington Free Press*.

"If every boy could read this book, or have it read to him, there would be fewer rogues in the world. A straightforward, honest story, without cant, without moralizing, full of genuine fun and hard common sense, it is just the tale that is needed to make a young fellow fall in love with simple integrity and fair dealing. As for Kit, the hero of the story, 'his one fault' was absent-mindedness. He forgot to lock his uncle's stable door, and the horse was stolen. In seeking to recover the stolen horse, he unintentionally stole another. In trying to restore the wrong horse to his rightful owner, he was himself arrested. After no end of comical and dolorous adventures, he surmounted all his misfortunes by downright pluck and genuine good feeling. It is a noble contribution to juvenile literature." — *Woman's Journal*.

"Young people always find in Mr. TROWBRIDGE'S stories an element which irresistibly attracts them, especially as he tells of things which often happen in boy and girl life, and makes all his accounts charmingly natural. HIS ONE FAULT will be found one of his most fascinating stories, and of benefit to its readers, having a wholesome moral so plainly set forth in every chapter, that the dullest boy will be impressed with the importance of correcting 'his one fault,' should he be afflicted with the weakness which caused the chief subject in this entertaining book so much real trouble." — *Boston Times*.

THE VAGABONDS.

Cloth. Illustrated. Full Gilt, \$1.50.

"We always like to see old friends in improved circumstances, and TROWBRIDGE'S VAGABONDS is a great favorite with the reading public and the public readers. It is as much an indispensable of a reader's repertoire as Poe's 'Raven' or 'King Robert of Sicily,' and its deep pathetic quality, the powerful picture of despair that it presents, which the gauzy veil of grim humor brings into much stronger light than it would possess without it, takes hold of the emotions and tends to give a man pause in reckless courses if he is inclined to them, and warns him away from the threshold if he has not yet entered upon them. The VAGABONDS appears in holiday attire. Mr. Darley has drawn with effective realism 'Roger and I,' and the ragged and wan companions arouse the sentiment of pity as much in the picture as they do in the poem. This is in all respects the finest edition of the work that we have ever seen, as our readers will readily believe, when we assure them that it takes rank with the best of Lee & Shepard's holiday work." — *Boston Post*.

"The publishers made a happy choice in selecting this exceedingly popular poem for illustration as a holiday book, uniform with their editions of 'The breaking waves dashed high,' 'O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?' 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,' etc. The VAGABONDS has taken its place among the imperishable poems, and thousands with whom it is a favorite will eagerly welcome this splendid combination of the arts of poetry, illustration, and book-making. Darley, in his portrayal of TROWBRIDGE'S pen-pictures, has graphically caught the spirit of the poem. With what vividness may a life-history be read — and what lessons may be gleaned by the thoughtful — in making a mental bridge between the lovely picture which illustrates —

'If you had seen HER, so fair and young,
Whose head was happy on this breast!'

and the picture —

'I have seen her? Once: I was weak and spent
On the dusty road: a carriage stopped:
But little she dreamed, as on she went,
Who kissed the coin that her fingers dropped.'

— *Home Journal*.

"This real gem of a poem comes to us in a setting of equal richness and worth. The VAGABONDS not only is a poem, but a story wherein the real humor and pathos of life are most skilfully and truthfully blended. It is needless to descant at length upon the merits of the poem, or the high moral lesson it conveys, but the elegant form in which it is now presented to the public justly deserves some mention. It is a handsome, gold-edged volume, in highly ornamental cloth binding; and on the heaviest pure cream-paper its clear print sparkles in vivid beauty, and its illustrations are the very happiest conceptions of artistic skill." — *Indianapolis Journal*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

J. T. TROWBRIDGE'S BOOKS.

THE SILVER MEDAL.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.



Imagine, if you can, four schoolboys as young housebreakers examining the plunder, "four bagsfull," and finding a silver medal, of which the above is a fac-simile. Imagine one of the youthful robbers to be the Benton Barry whose name is engraved on that medal, and you have the opening situation in a story that is intensely interesting in its serious as well as its humorous chapters. Mr. TROWBRIDGE also gives in this volume a few shorter stories that are among his brightest and best contributions. They are

THE TODDLER ON A TRAIN.

THE LEATHER SPECTACLES.

A BOY'S ADVENTURE AT NIAGARA FALLS.

A STORM ON THE PRAIRIES.

THE LOAD OF WOOD.

THE GOOSE-RACE.

THE WIDOW'S GOLD.

BOYS IN THE CITY.

"Mr. TROWBRIDGE'S books are always entertaining, sensible, and vigorous."
— *Woman's Journal*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

THE TINKHAM BROTHERS' TIDE-MILL.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.

"It is a lamentable truth that boys will quarrel among themselves, and that the class-room, the street, and the playground are but so many different battle-fields to many of them; and it is also to be regretted that they like to read about the fighting of other boys, but they do, and **THE TINKHAM BROTHERS' TIDE-MILL**, which is but one long quarrel, will be much more to their taste than if it were the biography of some nice little Laodiceans, who never had a disagreement with anybody. The author, Mr. TROWBRIDGE, has made his pugnacious heroes very clever and manly, and it will not hurt a boy to sympathize with them heartily. There is honest fun as well as hearty fighting in the little story, and girls will enjoy it almost as much as boys, and sympathize with the Tinkhams as thoroughly as the little heroine of the book." — *Budget*.

"Here, as ever, the author throws his influence on the side of right, and the book will prove pleasant and profitable reading for the young. Five brothers have a mother and sister to support. While quite young they attempt the manufacture of doll-carriages, and succeed. Although working under all sorts of disadvantages, they make money enough to buy a piece of property known as the tide-mill; but in so doing find that they have bought a quarrel with all their neighbors and a boat club and two towns about the water privilege. This displeasure of the people had been greatly aggravated by the meanness of the former owner, and it was only after years of trial that they were able to carry on their work in peace. But meantime they had made money, and were at length able to buy better property nearer a market for their wares, and pursue their calling comfortably. The treatment of the invalid mother, as manifested throughout the book, is a beautiful feature of it." — *Burlington Hawkeye*.

"The Tinkham Brothers are the devoted sons of an invalid mother. The story tells how they purchased a 'Tide-Mill' which afterwards, by the ill-will and obstinacy of neighbors, became a source of much trouble to them. It tells also how, by discretion and the exercise of a peaceable spirit, they at last overcome all difficulties. It is a well-written and pleasing book for boys, and bears upon one of the most important lessons of life, that of learning how to get along peaceably with troublesome neighbors under difficult circumstances. If it shall teach some young friend this lesson, it will repay its cost many times over." — *Christian Observer, Louisville, Ky.*

"Mr. TROWBRIDGE'S humor, his fidelity to nature and story-telling power lose nothing with years, and he stands at the head of those who are furnishing a literature for the young, clean and sweet in tone, and always of interest and value." — *The Continent*.

"This is one of Mr. TROWBRIDGE'S entertaining stories for the young, and is written in the popular style which of late the author has adopted. The story has just enough of romance blended with the narrative to make it popular with the readers." — *Journal of Education*.

BOSTON: LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS.

THE SATIN-WOOD BOX.

Cloth. Illustrated. \$1.25.

"The Satin-Wood Box" is a story for juvenile readers which bears the name of J. T. Trowbridge as its author. This is sufficient guarantee to parents, who are in search of wholesome but entertaining literature for their sons and daughters, of the high character of the book. Mr. Trowbridge always has a purpose in his writings, and this time he has undertaken to show how very near an innocent boy can come to the guilty edge, and yet be able, by fortunate circumstances, to rid himself of all suspicion of evil. There is something very winsome about Gifford Norcroft, the hero; but he has a singular way of falling into bad luck, although the careful reader will never feel the least disposed to doubt his honesty. The story is exceedingly profitable, although painful at times. But it is just the pain and the perplexity which impart to the story its intense interest, and will make it a useful story to boys who wish incentives to courage. It is issued as one of the volumes of the Tide-Mill Series, of which "Phil and his Friends," and "Tinkham Brothers' Tide-Mill," by the same author, have already found thousands of readers. There are several illustrations in the book, which help to explain the situation.—*Syracuse Standard*.

Almost as much could justly be said in favor of this book as we said of Mr. Trowbridge's story two years ago, "The Tinkham Brothers' Tide-Mill." It is a volume in the same series and its purpose is in the same line, the inculcation of high moral ideas. While Mr. Trowbridge is not exactly a lay preacher, he certainly is a teacher of morality. The "Tide-Mill" story illustrates the power and the dignity of steady perseverance, pluck and courage. The story of "The Satin-Wood Box" (the very title tells the tale) shows how an honest boy may and did come very near to the brink of crime through giving his companions too large a hold upon his conscience. The story is exciting but not unhealthily so, and it keeps the reader's sympathy right along on the side of innocence assailed. While it is a boys' book, there is no lack of interest in it for girls.—*Christian Advocate*.

Mr. J. T. Trowbridge's new story, The Satin-Wood Box, is the third of the "Tide-Mill Series," and tells an interesting and exciting story in that spirited and realistic style for which its prolific author is justly celebrated. The plot is strong, and is marked by vigorous dramatic force; the characters are vividly sketched, and the book is certain to delight the young readers for whose entertainment and instruction it was written.—*Boston Gazette*.



THE POCKET RIFLE

